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MAYFAIR TO MILLBANK.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

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MAYFAIR TO MILLBANK.

CHAPTER I.

STILL ATTENTIVE TO HIS FATHER'S INTERESTS.

The journey which Edgar contemplated was postponed till Job should receive a reply from Mr. Hindly. It was, undoubtedly, a bold course to pursue with regard to one so haughty, so utterly implacable; but he felt the justice of his claim, and was anxious to ascertain his father's feelings respecting it. A compromise, at all events, was the least that he expected.

About a week after Job's communication had been despatched, he received a letter, bearing on the envelope the well-known names of "Parchment, Tape, and Co.;" the word "private" was written in very plain letters in the corner above the address. Job had come down from "the house" weary with the long debates which had taken place respecting matters of no particular interest. He had no sooner reached his magnificently furnished house, than his eye fell upon the important letter. Tearing it open, he hurried through the contents, and then rang the bell for his confidential servant, Friday.

"Did yer ring, sir?" demanded that functionary, as he entered; but seeing his master engaged in writing, he stepped noiselessly aside and closed the door.

The letter was soon finished, sealed, and directed.

"You know where Mr. Hindly lives?"

Friday put back his hair, and stared as though startled at an apparition. But without waiting

for his answer, Job directed him to take the letter, and to be sure that Mr. Hindly received it immediately.

"Wait for a arnswer, sir, is I?"

"Yes; and don't return until you have one from Mr. Hindly himself. Be particular now."

"And if he ain't at home, sir?"

"Then wait till he is at home, that's all."

Friday sniffed, and tucking the letter carefully into his breast pocket, started on his unpleasant journey.

Meanwhile, Job read and re-read the letter; then laid it aside, and composed himself in his chair.

"This is a bad business," he thought, "a very bad business. Stupid ass; but surely he couldn't have been fool enough; d—— it, I've helped him into it a little. The deed by which the parchments are deposited in Solomon's hands will be the strongest evidence of all, if that old devil should be discovered. What can be done? It would have been better if the old fool had

burnt them. The fellow that sold them to Solomon won't accuse himself, and the probability is that Hindly's transactions with Solomon may be discovered; if so, Edgar's done, or else my share in the matter comes out. What a devil of a fix! I must go to Solomon and put him on his guard."

Looking at his watch, Job threw on his cloak, and, leaving word that he should be back in an hour, and that Mr. Hindly would kindly wait, he set out, jumped into a cab, and was soon once more in the sanctum sanctorum of the ever watchful Jew, whose chief business being transacted at the time when almost everybody else's was finished, was always to be found by those who understood the "open sessame" which gave ingress to his den.

"My showl, share, what ish dish?" exclaimed Solomon. "So mush hurry, and I wash jesht goin' to bed, for it ish late, and I nevare shtop up —nevare shtop up, share."

"Where are those deeds of Mr. Hindly's?" asked Job.

"The deedsh! What about de deedsh? why, dey are shafe enough."

"Has anyone enquired about them?" asked Job.

"Enquiresh!" exclaimed the Jew; "why, who ish to enquire? and what if dey did enquiresh, I should no give up de papersh without de monish. I pay for dem in monish, and have de shignature of Mashter Hindly for dem."

"But where did you get them?" asked Job.

"Get dem—vy, here I get dem off Mr. Hindly hisshelf, don't I shay; I have hish deed for dem, and dat ish all I know, Mr. Hawkinsh. Dey can't hurt me for lawful keepin' of what I pay monish for, and good monish, too."

"Come, come," said Job; "that won't do. You know, Solomon, there's a deuced bother about this robbery, and strange enough, Mr. Hindly is suspected of having committed it for the sake of getting those very papers which are in your possession. If you remember, you told me you bought them from a butterman; now look"—(and, indeed, Solomon did look, as though

his life depended on the intensity of his gaze)—"when Mr. Hindly heard that you had them, he was, of course, not aware there was any danger in signing a document by which they were deposited with you. As matters have turned out, it's an unfortunate business."

"I can't help dat," said the Jew; "dere ish worsh mishforshunesh at shea. But how can dey 'cushe de gentleman of robbin' hisshelf of hish own propertish? Vy, de life o' me, how can dat be, share?"

"Suppose anyone comes to you to-morrow and enquires about these deeds?"

"Den I shall shay, pay me my monish and dey are yoursh."

"But they will probably take you, as well as the deeds," said Job, smiling.

"Vat for?"

"For having in your possession stolen property."

"Den I have hish deed of deposhit, and I don't care."

"But, do you think, Solomon, that I could

suffer Mr. Hindly to be convicted on evidence which you know to be false; you must show where you got the deeds. The signature of Mr. Hindly was a mistake. Now let me ask you, and give me a candid answer—do you know the man that sold them to you?"

"Not I," said Solomon, "and never shee him, on my life—never shee him."

"Does he know you, do you think?"

Solomon looked confused.

"Suppose, to screen Mr. Hindly, he frankly confesses that you have the papers, and that he sold them to you?"

"I vill show dish deed, and dat vill tell how I got dem for my monish. Now, I will tell you, Mr. Hawkinsh, pay me my monish back and take de papersh; den I vill shay no more."

"Not I," said Job, smiling, "I won't have anything to do with them; but, if you like, I'll buy Mr. Hindly's deed of you, and leave the matter as it was."

"Imposhible," said the Jew; "look, Mr. Haw-

kinsh, my businessh ish buy and shell, and get shmall gain by quick return. I have shold de deedsh, and Mr. Hindly's too."

"Sold them! and to whom?"

"It'sh no matter," said Solomon; "dey are shold, I tell you."

Job looked at the Jew with a scrutinising glance, in order to discover, if possible, whether fear, or hope of a large offer moved him; it was clear that the cunning money-lender felt the advantage which he possessed. The cautions Job had given him, showed who was most endangered by the transaction; if Hindly was likely to be tried, he knew that he was in a better position as he then stood than he could possibly be under any other circumstances. The very fact of Hindly's depositing the deeds with him, would preclude the suspicion that he had any idea at the time he purchased them, that he was receiving stolen property. And so far as Hawkins was concerned, he had no fear from any confession on his part; their business together had been of too miscel-

laneous a character. Solomon also knew that nothing was farther from the thoughts of the honorable member, than implicating himself with one who was accused of burglary, however intimate they might have been, or however eager to free each other from the consequences of this reckless career.

"I suppose you are aware," said Job, "that if the money is presented to you to redeem the pledge, you will be compelled to restore it."

Solomon laughed.

"No fear of dat," said he; "but in dat cashe when de monish is here de deedsh will be here too."

"At all events," said Job, "for the sake of all parties, you had best deny all knowledge of the matter—do you understand?"

"We shall shee," said Solomon.

And Job, after once more enjoining secrecy and silence upon him, turned back to his house, where Edgar was waiting for him.

"Hindly!" exclaimed Job, as he grasped his hand, "you wonder what can have happened that I send for you at this hour."

"I suppose a letter from my father's lawyer," said Edgar.

"Yes; but such as will give you little pleasure to read—look at it."

A choking sensation prevented Edgar from thoroughly comprehending the import of the letter: the words seems confused and mixed.

"A warrant!" he exclaimed. "Fools! how can they suspect me?"

"Read on," said Job.

"Read!" exclaimed Edgar; "I can't read it—d— fools! 'tisn't clever enough, although the intention is sufficiently malignant for the devil himself. Good God! to accuse me of such a thing!"

Job picked up the letter which Edgar had flung from him, and seated himself opposite, waiting till his passion should sufficiently subside to allow him to proceed.

"Hindly," said he, "what of the key? that's an unfortunate circumstance."

"I don't know," said Edgar; "the key was in my possession, but how I lost it I can't imagine; I must have dropped it from my pocket; perhaps it was taken for the purpose of raising a charge against me."

"Some one saw you with certain gipsies."

"That's true. They showed me the way to Heathmoor—what of that?"

"The keeper swears you were in the house at the time of the burglary."

Edgar smiled, but it was a smile of bitter contempt.

"You swore you would have the papers from the cabinet it seems," added Job.

"And will have them yet," replied Edgar. "This is a damnable invention," he continued; "but I can't suspect my own father of being in such a plot—it can't be."

"No," said Job; "you see this letter advises

you to go away, and save the old man the disgrace of—of—"

"Of what?" demanded Edgar.

"Of a trial."

"That is what I'll seek rather than avoid," said Edgar. "My God! who could have thought this?"

"Just as you like," said Job. "I would, at all events, spare my enemies the gratification of seeing me apprehended. You see there is a warrant."

"I don't care," said Edgar; "my enemies have now done their worst—the plot of their cursed drama is ripe, let's see the sequel—I'll be the victim or the victor."

"You see," said Job, "the most extraordinary part of the business is, that they should have hunted up these papers so perseveringly—what use would they be to any one but yourself? It's an unfortunate coincidence—your threat followed so closely by the very event."

"It matters nothing," interrupted Edgar, impatiently; "they may accuse and convict me if they like, but they can't make me guilty—there is nothing in the circumstance of their taking the cabinet; it was a conspicuous object, and to the eye of a burglar would present sufficient attraction. But I shall set out at once for Heathmoor and refute the charge—what most concerns me in the matter is that the papers are gone—the muniments of Heathmoor, and—"

"Let me advise you," said Job; "don't do anything of the kind; remain in seclusion for the present; no one will discover you if you take care. I will see your father, as well as the persons concerned in the matter—the magistrates from whom the warrant issued, and learn what the evidence really is. You say the Grundys have invited you to stay with them till your affairs are settled; acquaint them frankly with the whole matter, and remain with them till you see me again."

Edgar felt keenly the miserable position in which he was placed, but his heart was too bold and his spirit too high to cower beneath such malicious accusations.

"No, Hawkins," he exclaimed, "I will confront my enemies and confute them. Heaven will defend the right. As for my being in the neighbourhood on the night of the robbery, it's false—a lie."

"Had you left?" asked Job. "It was on the night of the twenty-first."

"My mind's bewildered," said Edgar. "I know nothing of dates. Was it Wednesday or Thursday?"

"Thursday," said Job, referring to a pocket almanack. "Early on Thursday morning, or late on the night of Wednesday. But it doesn't matter; it is hardly supposed that you were actually engaged in it; an accessory's enough for your enemies. Take my advice, and for the present keep close."

"Never!" exclaimed Edgar. "I will go to Heathmoor to-morrow. Good night, Hawkins. Serve me if you can. I will write to you."

Job looked with an expression of pity on his countenance, and the thought flashed across his mind that it would be better to offer no further opposition to Edgar's going, for should he happen to pay Solomon a visit, it might be fatal to himself; accompanying him, therefore, to the door, he shook hands with him warmly, and wished him good-bye, little dreaming it was the last time they would ever meet as friends.

Job returned to his room, and feeling disinclined for sleep, turned over the unfortunate events in his mind, till he was half distracted. Hopelessly involved in debt and forgery as he was, there remained nothing for him but to pursue the course he had so long followed, and to plunge deeper and deeper, for the bottom of the abyss was not yet reached. He knew that no honest project could now rescue him; every stroke must be bold

and at all hazards. His father was yet rich, and to his father's riches he must still have recourse. He must redeem Edgar's documents at any cost, and by that means destroy the evidence of the forgery, which could scarcely escape detection if the deed of deposit were allowed to remain in Solomon's hands. The result of his fraudful ingenuity will be apparent from the visit to his father on the following day.

He first of all called on Solomon, and begged him on no account to part with the deeds until he should see him again, stipulating at the same time for their redemption at the price of a thousand pounds.

As Job entered his father's room there was the same air of gravity and thoughtfulness which had ever characterised him, while he introduced the subject of his visit in the same easy and unsuspicious manner.

"Well, Job, boy, how dost get on? How dost like Parliament?"

Job explained the nature of the last night's

debate, which seemed to produce vast satisfaction in the mind of the old man.

"Thee'll be Chancellor of the Stechequer one day, boy," said the father, "though I ain't seen a speech of yours yet in the papers."

"You soon will," answered the aspiring Job, "but business is rather pressing at present. I think I told you that the Godolphin Co. have appointed me trustee of a building fund."

"They have!" exclaimed the old man, "and what then?"

"I've leased them the Roxburgh estate."

"For a good rent I hope—a good rent, mind, boy; recollect, improved rent."

"When I say I've leased it," said Job, "I mean negotiations are pending, but they want to examine the deeds."

"Mustn't let 'em go out of your hand, boy. How much is the rent?"

"It will be nearly double," said Job, "if I can drive my bargain; but it must be done while—"

"While the iron's hot; ay! boy, that's it; but mind, be careful with them deeds."

Thus saying, the old man opened the strong box, and took out a packet, which Job proceeded to examine with characteristic steadiness.

"They are not all here," said he.

"Not there, boy? Why, where the devil be they then?"

"I should think at your solicitors—Smallfry's and Pidgeons," said Job; "suppose I give you a memorandum of having taken these, and then go to Smallfry's and Pidgeons."

"Very well," said Hawkins, "but mind you don't part with 'em; mind that, Job."

"I think you have known me long enough, father," said the affectionate son, "to trust me."

The tone of Job was such as to indicate some emotion.

The old man took his hand, and grasping it firmly, said—

"Wast always a good boy, Job."

After carefully folding and tying up the deeds,

Job deposited his memorandum, which in substance declared that he had taken the deeds of conveyance of the Ruxleigh estate to Messrs. Smallfry's and Pidgeons, to enquire after the rest of the title deeds. We shall see by and bye how these deeds went to look after the others, and how they never came back, any of them.

"Now," said Job, "there's one thing more I have to say, father."

"Say on, boy," said the old man; "say on, Job."

"You know there's a snug little place near Ruxleigh?"

"Hem! What, Ridleys, boy?"

"The same," said Job. "He's now willing to sell."

"Ah! he is—is he?" exclaimed the old man, with a singularly triumphant grin. "I thought he'd come round one o' these days; he were a fool he didn't take my money at first. Knowed he couldn't keep it. How much does he want? Mind, it oughtn't to be much, Job, specially

if he's in difficulties. Always catch 'em, boy, when they're in difficulties."

This charitable sentiment made Job smile.

"He asks five thousand five hundred," said Job.

"Bah!" exclaimed the old man. "If he wants money he'll be glad to take two."

"Not when the Godolphin Co. will give more," replied the son.

"But you are trustee, boy; and the devil! bean't you manager and all; a M.P., too."

"But I must act honestly," answered Job.

"Ay, ay! *honestly;* that's true, boy; but you must be honest to me too; mind that, Job; honesty should begin at home."

"Well, well," said Job, "I merely act as your agent, father. If you don't care for the place, why, I'll say no more about it. At the same time, I think it is worth a thought; and I imagine it would be cheap at five thousand."

"Ah! for its cheapness, may be; but bargains are what I like, you know; and if we can get it for three we are paying too dear for it at five."

"But it can't be had," said Job. "I've driven the hardest bargain I ever made in my life, and the immense value it will be to you is beyond all price."

"Don't say nothing about that, boy," replied the old man, chuckling over the prospect of so advantageous an accession to his estates. "Don't say nothing about that; it's no use to us; we don't want it; rather not have it; wouldn't have it at a gift. That's the way to deal, boy. Lor! when I was your age I'd strike a bargain with the keenest of 'em in London; they couldn't never get nothing out of old Job. Never was but one man that was half as keen as me."

"He must have been a prodigy," said Job.

"A what!" asked the old man.

"A prodigy."

"I don't know your fine parliament names, boy," answered Hawkins, "but he were a smelter, or, what I used to say, a melter; dost know what that means?"

"A melter," said Job. "I suppose he was a founder."

"Founder! yes, he were a founder and a finder too. Turned out money as good as the mint."

"You don't mean to say he was a smasher?" said Job.

"There, I say he were a melter," answered the old man, somewhat peevishly.

"Who was he?"

"A Jew, you may be sure—Solomon, as we called him."

Job showed nothing of the surprise he felt, but replied, very carelessly—

"And he could drive a bargain with you, could he? Then you won't purchase?"

"Harkee, boy. Who said I wouldn't purchase?"

"Then I'll see him to-morrow," said Job. "Shall I pay a deposit?"

"Ay, bind the bargain, boy; but mind, if you can get it for four don't give five."

"But it's no use to try," said Job. "The fact is, it would be cheap to you at ten. The Godolphin Co. will rent it at seven hundred a year."

"Wast always a good boy, Job; do your best, it will all be for your good when I am gone."

"Now don't talk like that, father. I hate to hear you speak as though you were going to die. Shall I come to-morrow for a cheque? or will it be better to take one in my pocket?"

"Ay! to be sure it will; and look better, too, for a Member of Parliament. I've a mind, boy, to give you a cheque book for yourself. Would be handy, wouldn't it?"

"I don't care for that," said Job. "You know I can always—"

"Ah! so you can, boy," said Hawkins, "so you can."

Job's tactics were not such as would have been adopted by an ordinary rogue. A cheque book for himself, with power to draw on his father's banker, was not exactly a convenient method of proceeding. It would have involved the performance of several preliminary matters, which at that time might have placed his character in jeopardy. Job already possessed sufficient influence over his father to enable him to carry out his plans, and therefore contented himself for the

present with taking the cheque for a thousand pounds, which his father drew, payable to the order of Mr. Ridley, and after promising to call again in the course of a day or so, wished the old man good-night.

CHAPTER II.

OUTWITTED.

THE fertile mind of the forger was prolific in every kind of expedient, whether for the purpose of carrying out a project or of escaping detection when it was accomplished. His plans were carefully designed, and never failed to answer.

A man not acquainted with the intricacies of the law, could never have accomplished half as much, while the very luck, as some would designate it, which attended Job's multifarious projects, was nothing but the result of his well-designed plots. Difficulties no sooner presented

themselves than plans to evade them were devised.

There was one, however, attending the cheque, which frustrated his plan with regard to Edgar's deed of deposit; he had not the signature of Ridley, and, therefore, could not indorse the instrument, which was payable to his order. There was little difficulty, however, in obtaining that; for, as Ridley was treasurer to a benevolent institution, Job immediately forwarded to him, personally, a donation of ten pounds on behalf of the society, at the same time requesting an acknowledgment.

The delay, however, that this preliminary business occasioned, was fatal to the plan for which it was devised; for, Mr. Ridley being out of town, the receipt did not arrive till two days after the letter containing the donation had been posted. It came, however, with a most gracious acknowledgment, which Job heartily cursed; then, with the utmost dexterity, he indorsed the cheque with the name of Richard Ridley.

With this he was about to proceed to Solomon's, when a messenger arrived with a note, requesting his immediate attendance at the House of Commons.

Putting the deeds of the Ruxleigh estate in his pocket, and calling a cab, he proceeded with the utmost haste to Parliament Street, Westminster, and stopped at a law stationer's, where he ordered duplicates of all the deeds to be prepared as quickly as possible.

Leaving him to his business in the House, the reader must return to some other characters of the narrative.

Before Mr. Hindly (the elder) left Heathmoor, at which place he stayed several days, a letter was received by Quarterman, the parish constable, which was couched in the following terms :—

"MARSTER KUNSTABEL,—

"Dissay u've heeard on the robereye of Heethmoore thare Was sum ship

skins tookt, an' as thay bee no yuse tu hus, wee tooke 'em tu lunnun, an' has wee dount wornt tu rong Noboddy, yu'ul vynde 'em att a Guse, as thay korles Sollermon, at numbere 16, Kidnaphur stureet, wite Chappel, 1 o' the best fullersh out; but hee com'd by 'em 'onest mind, an' if u gose tu make a rore wi' that gen'man, i wornes u as u wool like enuff get ur throte cut, hif no wus coms to u. mister indly ant got 'em, and never node nothin' abote it."

This important letter was at once taken by Quarterman to the authorities. The sensation it produced was great; conjectures were rife, but no time was lost in despatching the intelligence to London.

Two detectives were ordered to proceed at once to Kidnapper Street, a spot long suspected, although the utmost vigilance of the police had been baffled by the cunning of Solomon and his clients.

There were two courses open to the detectives;

the one was to arrest Solomon on the charge of receiving stolen property, by which proceeding there was the possibility of losing the deeds, since it was scarcely likely that he would confess to the possession of them; the other plan was to meet him as companions of the robbers, and inveigle him into the delivery of the documents. It required no little tact to deal with one whose life had been spent in contrivances to overreach his customers, and to evade the consequences of breaking the law.

After some deliberation, it was arranged that one only should obtain admittance to the office, and that his appearance should be that of a person accustomed to the kind of traffic in which Solomon was suspected to deal; the other was to enter in the character of a gentleman, and if necessary, to apprehend his comrade on the charge of the Heathmoor robbery. The next step was to be an offer of a considerable amount, to allow him to escape; this, amounting to an admission of guilt, would, in all probability, intimidate Solomon into a similar offer.

With this arrangement they set out on their hazardous expedition. But men accustomed to the artifices necessarily employed in detecting the guilt of the most cunning of mankind, proceed in a manner beyond the comprehension of those who know nothing of the acting which is necessary to accomplish their object. Their style of performance is of a different character from that which produces a stage effect; their personifications of character are not to deceive an audience, but to overreach the shrewdest of actors. No art of deception requires more skill and so little practice. The natural aptitude requisite for this peculiar business, does not belong to one in a thousand, and no one can have a conception of the manner in which an expert detective proceeds in his business by any description which a novelist can convey. There is so much in the manner of the performance, that the most graphic narrative would leave the reader astonished at the success of the artifice.

The detectives selected for the present purpose, were among the best of the force, and the admir-

able manner in which they carried out their plans could only be imagined by one who knew the deep cunning of their crafty adversary. To deceive the unwary is no great feat, but to assume a character which shall at once impose upon the practised deceiver, and unmask his villany in spite of himself, is what very few can accomplish. The ordinary masquerade is not a deception; the masquerade of life is. It is not when we cover our faces that we impose upon mankind, but when our faces cover our intentions.

King and Robins were men of peculiar stamp, their features were flexible, and their powers of perception exceedingly keen.

King was to enter first, but there was another circumstance to consider before he commenced his part. What would be the most appropriate costume for the occasion? Solomon, there was little doubt, had dealings with all kinds of persons, from the profligate scion of nobility to the roughest burglar.

In what character was it most likely that a

thief would visit him? To settle the preliminaries, they repaired to a public house immediately opposite the money-monger's, called for refreshment, and without exciting suspicion, watched the old man's shop for the purpose of seeing what sort of persons passed in and out. The result was that King took from his pocket a blue bag, into which he put his overcoat, and then tied it securely by the neck. A black moustache and beard were next adjusted, and then he disarranged his hair, unbrushed his hat, and dusted his coat. Never was proselyte so rapidly made.

"You're as good a Jew as a Gentile could make," said Robins; "but the old dodger 'll know your voice ain't the thing."

"It don't matter," replied King; "I can try it on, and when he finds me out, I am the burglar as sent him the deeds, d'ye see?"

"That'll do," said Robins; "and I'm the pleece that apprehends you; that's it."

"Right," said Robins.

Meanwhile, Solomon, all unconscious of the "little game" that was soon to be played upon him, was turning over in his mind the very circumstance of the packet, and wondering why Mr. Hawkins had so long delayed to keep his word, and he was congratulating himself upon the advantageous position which he occupied with respect to the heir of Heathmoor.

"By holy Moshesh!" he had said to himself many times since Job's last visit, and was again repeating—"This ish fortunate businessh. Why de deed would transhport him, for where ish de witness dat would confesh to de fact, and widout a witnessh I am shafe, and wid de witnessh I am shafe, for here ish de shignature of young Hindly. Ah! by Moshesh! who ish dat at de door? I will jesht look 'im in de face from de vinder; it ish a shteady knock, jesht de knockd at shuits my plashe. Ah! a Shew, by gore—now Eliash and de prophetsh. I wonder which tribe he belongsh to?—Ishmael—ah! he have not de noshe of Ishmael. Vell, come in—come in,

brother of Israel, deshendant of de fader of de faitful. He have a bag, too—full—full."

With these reflections Solomon proceeded to the door.

"I dareshay he vant to leave hish bag for a leetle vhile. Vel, sho he shall."

Thus saying, purposely loud enough to be heard, Solomon opened the door.

"Good evenin', share," said he.

"Anything in my vay dis evenin'?" said King.

"What ish your vay?" asked Solomon; "you vant to leave de bag for a leetle vhile; vare good, share."

"Be quick," said King; "let's come in."

Solomon stepped aside, and allowed King to pass, after which he closed the door with a bang, and followed his supposed customer, who proceeded to the inner chamber, as though he had known the way for years.

"Hav'n't sheen you lately, share," said Solomon.

"But you've heard from me, and that's as good, ain't it," said King; "you got de parcel all right."

"De partshel, de partshel; by gore, vat partshel? No, I 'ave got no partshel.''

"Yes, yes; all right," said King; "I mean de t'ings from Heat'moor. By de prophetsh dat wash a businessh."

"No, share—no, share; I know notting of your meaninsh."

"Why, what a got dam you are!" said King. "You've got a pretty bargain, anyhow; and if I'd knowed half as much as I do now, you wouldn't have had 'em. Whatever you do, keep quiet."

Solomon, although keen and cunning, was thrown off his guard.

"I 'ave had no deedsh from you," said the money-lender.

"Well, we knows all about that; what mattersh who shends or who bring? Do you vant a vatch?"

"Ah! let me shee—let me shee. Oh, it ish trumpare vatch—a common—"

"I suppose it's worth shomething, ishn't it?"

"It ish only good for to break up," said Solomon, turning it in his hand. "I would not give two-penshe for to carry it."

"How much 'll you give?"

"It ish honesht come by my friend, I hope?" said Solomon. "I nevare buy widout dat. An honesht penny ish wort a tieve's pound."

"Do yer take me for a thief?" asked King, laughing. "Why, I can be as honest as Zaccheus, when de time come, and give fourfold for what I take in bad timesh. I buy dis watch, good sare, at—"

"Ah! never mind *at*. I can do widout de addressh, but it ish a poor tool to keep time wid. Vhy, it did nevare go, surely?"

"It went fast enough before I had it," said King; "the young dog run that half-hour in five-and-twenty minutes. You know—"

"Dat ish no bargain for me, dish recommendation. I vill give you five shillin' for dish vatch."

"Five shillin'!" said King; "den I shall 'ave no profit, but de risk, dat ish all. No, sare, I will no take five shillin', but it is yours for ten. And you ought to give me someting more for de deeds."

"Deedsh!" exclaimed Solomon, "did evare anybodysh hear? I can't tell about deedsh. Vhat deedsh you mean, share? I ave no deedsh, on my shoul, share."

"Vare well," said King; "then I shall vish you good-day, and take mine vatch."

"But you 'ave shold de vatch," said Solomon, "you 'ave shold de vatch for ten shillin';" and as he spoke, he let it fall upon the edge of the fender, and broke the glass into sundry pieces. "Dare!" he exclaimed, "dare ish ac—shi—dent!"

King asked for the money.

"Dere ish de monish," said Solomon; "and

now de pieces may go to de devil! a dead losh to me!" And thus saying, he flung the broken watch behind the fire; and taking the poker, jammed it towards the back of the grate.

King, however, looked upon all these incidents with the utmost indifference, although he quickly discovered the effect of the poking operation—for a little trap-door in the grate, which resembled a false-back, opened sufficiently to admit anything of moderate size.

"Noting to drink?" said King.

"Notting to drink! vhy, yesh, to be shure, share, dere ish some good whishky, and de brandysh; vhich vill you take?"

"A little neat," said King, "for I must go—this blessed bag of mine—"

"Ah! vhat is dat?"

"Oh, noting, except some odd things from Heathmoor."

"By Gar! let me shee dem odd tingsh!"

"No," said King, "you are not de man; I mistake you for de—de—ah—I do tink it must

'ave been Hounsditch, dat he took de deeds—to Nabot's."

"Nabot'sh!" exclaimed the Jew; "trusht not Nabot, he ish a bad market, and give leetle price for de mershandish; but den he no care where dey comesh from, or how dey are got. 'Oneshty ish de besht polishy, all over de world, share; and de man dat dealsh 'oneshtly, if he give shmall prish, ish better to be trushted dan he dat givesh larshe prish, and no care for de meansh of gettin'. But who wash de meshenger of de deedsh?"

King showed nothing of surprise at this unexpected question, but answered with the coolness of the most practised thief.

"Solomon," said he, "no names, no faces, is my vay of doing business. I suppose you wouldn't shwear to me if you shaw me in a court, would you?"

"I would shooner shwear *at* you for gettin' dere, by Gar," said Solomon; "and for de Hounshdish party, have no truck in dat quarter, for I hearsh—I hearsh—"

"Well, I don't mind," said King, "what you hearsh; if it's done, it's done; he has only got to take care of de papersh and pocket the monish for 'em when it comes. That won't harm him. I must go."

Thus saying, King took up his bag, and was apparently about to leave; but Solomon detained him, urging him to show the contents.

"You won't betray me about these papers?" said King.

"My showl no!" said Solomon; "but don't go to de Houndsdish man—for if he 'ave not—"

"It is either him or you," said King; "and de devil's in it if I am mistaken if I go to both. Let me see—let me see."

"Vell," said Solomon, "de Hounsdish man have not de papersh."

"I know it," answered King; "but what's the use of this d—— fencing. Now here ish a parcel of tings—deeds, and de devil knows what—dat I got from dis same Heatmoor, and which I will show you in a—in—a—de tam knot of dis

bag—" (Here King applied his teeth to the string delaying the time in order that Robins, whom he expected every moment, might appear upon the scene).

"Vait a moment, share—vait a moment; here ish a knife somewhere about; let me shee for de knife; come here de leetle knife—"

"De leetle knife" was a large carving instrument, that had not been on a knife-board for many weeks.

"Ha! here ish de leetle knife; by gar! he will shoon cut it."

Thus saying, Solomon drew the long blade under his arm by way of wiping it, and was about to apply it to the invincible knot, which was becoming closer under the influence of King's teeth.

"By gar!" exclaimed King, "hold back de knife, sare, or you will have mine nose. I vill do it presentlys."

"But vhy not cut de knot?" asked Solomon.

"Do you see," said King, standing up and holding the neck of the bag in his hand, "dis

bag ish an important one wid me. I 'ave many tings to put into it dis vare night, for—look, Master Sholomons !" (Here he leaned towards the old man, and dropped his voice to a whisper) —"I have some tings to fetch from—"

"Vhere?" whispered Solomon, opening his eyes to their widest extent.

At this instant the proceedings were interrupted by a knock at the street door.

King started, as if terrified out of his wits, and asked—

"Where ! where ! can dis bag go, Master Sholomons ! 'Ave you a place ? Quick ! quick ! By gar ! dis ish a—"

"Hush !" said Solomons, "it ish notting ; but shee, here, put de bag in dish cupboard."

Thus saying, he pushed open a trap-door, so cunningly contrived, that it had eluded the observation of King, who had examined every crevice and fissure of the walls.

King peeped into the hole, which Solomon designated a cupboard.

"By gar!" said he, "where ish dis place lead to?"

"Put de bag in," said the Jew.

King shook his head; yet hesitated, as if in great fear.

"Vy, vat you fearsh?" asked Solomon; "it ish no vhere, dat ishn't; you will 'ave your bag all right preshently."

Another soft knock.

"Put it in, I shay!"

"Mind," said King, "I vill 'ave my bag again?"

"On my showl, of coorshe."

"You shwear?"

"By de book."

"Ish de deeds down here?" asked King.

"Bah!" said Solomon, poking in the bag. "Hush bout de deeds; but let me shee who ish dish at de door!"

"You won't let any suspicious character in?" said King. "Mind, Solomon, if I am scragged—"

"Schragged!" said the Jew, "who ever heard

of a honesht feller bein' schragged! Vait here, and I will shee who dish is."

Thus saying, Solomon proceeded to the door, leaving King to himself, who examined more minutely the cupboard, into which had been so hastily thrust the well-tied bag. There was an old wall at the back, the loose bricks of which gave some indication of a recess behind. Carefully taking out one of the bricks, the aperture afforded him a view which confirmed his suspicions. Tucked into various openings of the brickwork, were some closely folded parchments, the edges of which were ingeniously coated with a kind of limy mixture, in imitation of mortar. Having made his observations, King replaced the brick and closed the door; then, turning his attention to the conference which was being held at the door, he heard Solomon say—

"I ashure you, share, dere ish no man here of de short you shay."

"Well, I must see," said Robins; "you have no objection to my looking in, I suppose?"

"Vell, share, it ish bold for to come dish waysh to an 'onesht man's housh for a tief. I 'ave no dealing wid tieves, share; but if you musht shee, I'll tell you dere ish a broder of my creed here, but he ish not de pershon you vant."

"It's not a Jew I want," said Robins.

"Den you may come in," said Solomon, "come in, share."

Robins marched into the house, and followed Solomon into his private room.

"Dere," said he, "dere ish all de people who ish here."

Robins appeared to eye King in a suspicious manner, while King, at the same time, affected to evade his gaze.

"It's no use, Weazel," said Robins, "you know what I want you for."

"It's a lie," said King, "I don't know anything about it."

"I apprehend you on a charge of being implicated in a burglary at Heathmoor."

"Mine got!" exclaimed Solomon, "did evare any bodys hear?"

"I'm innocent!" said King.

"Give up the papers; come, Weazel, it's no use, you know, we are old acquaintances."

"What papers?" exclaimed King. "I haven't got no papers. Solomons, did I 'ave papers?"

"Mine got share, I 'ave no conshern in de matter of dish businessh."

"Give up the papers, Weazel, that's all I want; they are traced to your possession and to this house."

"To dish houshe!" said Solomon. "Heavensh forbid."

"You can clear me," remarked Weazel.

"How can I clear you?" said Solomon, with a look of supreme contempt for the man who seemed to be betraying him.

"I must have you both," said Robins, taking out a set of handcuffs.

"No, mine got," said Solomon, "here ish a

mishtake; and now look here, share, I vill tell you dis ish a piece of villain businessh dat have no match. You shay dere ish some peashin in dis ting; well den it is master Hindly hish own shelf, and here I will shatishfy you, share, in a moment. Here ish his deed of deposhit for de parshments, and I advansh monish upon it, and now to get it from me he confesh dat he have done de burglare; but I am free and clear of de sharge, tank de prophetsh. I am not a rogue, if I am a poor Shew."

Thus saying Solomon produced the deed which purported to have been signed by Edgar, and handed it to Robins.

"Where are the other parchments?" asked the latter.

"Vhere dey shall be," said Solomon, "until I get my monish for dem."

"Ha!" said Weazel; "now what do you say to it?"

"Yesh! now what do you say to it?" repeated Solomon.

"I shall take this deed," said Robins, folding it up, and placing it in his pocket.

"Den you will show me your authoritish," said Solomon.

"There it is."

"Dis ish a villain businessh," said Solomon, "a villain—"

The old man interrupted himself, and grating his teeth looked upon the officer with a countenance that expressed more of the demon than the man. Robins, however, coolly buttoned up his coat, and asked for the papers, remarking at the same time that it would save the old man the unpleasant alternative of having his house searched, upon which he yielded, though reluctantly, to the necessity of the occasion, and delivered up the packet of parchments.

King remained a few moments after his comrade had departed in order to regain possession of his bag, and left the house.

Thus the plan succeeded beyond expectation. Solomon's firmness was shaken by the apparently

timid behaviour of Weazel, who seemed every moment ready to confess that he had conveyed the parchment to the Jew. The policy of Solomon, therefore, was to prevent this confession by producing the deed of deposit.

CHAPTER III.

MR. RAFFLES ON LITERATURE.

It would be a very shocking proposition, to affirm that an innocent man may be miserable and a guilty one tolerably comfortable, if not happy. This is so much against the idea of novelists in general, and especially the more sentimental writers, that it cannot be accepted as absolute truth. However, true or false, I shall take the liberty of asserting that in the instances I am about to adduce it was so. Job was as happy, in spite of all his fraudulent practices, as if he

had been the benefactor of his race, while on the other hand Edgar was as miserable as one could possibly be. Conscience is a very brave subject to preach about, and may be a very powerful engine to work with if you only get the subjects to work upon; but with regard to Job it would have taken a great deal of pulpit eloquence to make him feel that he had committed a crime. His conscience, indeed, was rather comforting to him than otherwise, for it came to him as it usually does in the midst of a career of guilt, unaccompanied with remorse. It is not till the devil has no more work for us to do that he discharges us; not till we have accomplished his purposes do we feel that our reward is bitterness. But the reward seldom comes till the work is done, if it does the devil is a better paymaster than most people. I have said that Job's conscience was rather a comfort to him; the reasoning which he used to make it so was simply this —that if he had appropriated Mary's and Martha's money he intended to return it; if he

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had conveyed away estates which did not belong to him he meant to set the whole matter right some day. The probability was that his father would die first; if so, Job would be in a position to redeem everything. He had done no wrong, because he intended ultimately to do right.

But with regard to Edgar, he was in a different position; he was alone in the world, and destitute. He had made something by occasional contributions to the periodical press; but the precariousness of such a mode of subsistence convinced him, as it has many others, that it was rather a slow suicide than a living. He had formed an acquaintance with Martha and her sister, but his pride had revolted at the idea of communicating to them his bitter disappointments or his poverty. His health itself was giving way beneath the burden that pressed continually upon him. One last effort he made in order to defray his expenses to Heathmoor, and he applied himself night and day to the work.

Edgar had kept his name from his manuscript

for the simple reason that no name at all is better than an unknown one. But as he presented himself at the office of the editor and requested to see that awful personage, he gave the name of a celebrated author of the day, well knowing that that was the most likely way to gain access to the presence chamber.

Of course he was at home, but as Edgar entered a slight scowl on the countenance of the little man in spectacles, who sat at a table covered with papers, convinced the luckless author that he was by no means a welcome visitor. Mr. Raffles didn't even deign to rise from his seat. Edgar, however, preserved his presence of mind under the awful circumstances, and introduced the subject of his visit.

"Are you a relation of the celebrated author whose name you have the honour to bear?" asked Raffles.

"No, sir," said Edgar.

"Very strange," muttered the editor.

Of course it was *very* strange that an obscure

youth like Edgar should have the very name of so illustrious a personage.

"Two of the same name," said he, "is rather a misfortune."

"Indeed," said Edgar; "is there so much then in the title of a book?"

The little man took a pinch of snuff, and gave a contemptuous smile at the young author, evidently astonished at his innocence.

"Why, you see," he remarked, "it is the title page that makes the book. The public don't read the works of nameless writers; it's just the same, sir, as 'Bass' Pale Ale,' or, 'Guiness' Stout,' or 'Day and Martin's Blacking.'"

"Literature ranks so high, does it?" replied Edgar.

"Rank high!" exclaimed Raffles; "it is so, sir. Why look at that foolish boy Chatterton, when he published with the name of a celebrated character, his book was hailed with delight and applauded to the skies; but as soon as it was discovered that Chatterton wrote the thing him-

self, there was an end of it. It wasn't good then, and was damned accordingly."

"Then my manuscript's no use," said Edgar, once more returning it to his pocket.

Mr. Raffles was a benevolent hearted man, and he saw the disappointment which the face of Edgar manifested.

"Let me see it," said he, and turning over a leaf or two he read a page, then another and another.

"The language is very good," said he; "poetical, flowery, and so forth, and I should be happy to use it; but—but, you see, the public taste must be studied, and the public generally don't like good writing. You smile, and well you may; but, nevertheless, it is an undeniable truth. What we want for the public is gossip, fashionable gossip, scandal, domestic secrets, and all that. The incidents of a modern novel must be bigamy, murder, adultery, fashionable debauchery, and, so to speak, refined licentiousness. The sort of book to take is one that the young

lady just verging on womanhood would steal into a closet and hide herself for the whole day to read; something tickling to the passions. Don't you understand?"

"It's a debased taste," said Edgar.

"But you have only to examine the most popular literature of the day, in order to convince yourself that I describe what really is a fact. You forget, my dear sir, that it is not the authors who support the public, but the public the authors; and while I ignore modern literature, I by no means censure the writers. Writers, like other people, must be fed, and if the public require literature of a certain stamp they will have it. Now here you see, turning to the MS., is a scene which is very pretty, and a conversation which you have introduced really edifying; but the public don't want to be edified, they want their feelings roused, their animal passions excited."

"But if a great author had written that?" said Edgar.

"Then it would have sold, of course," replied Raffles; "or if instead of being what it appears, a really clever thing, it had been the veriest trash that could be penned, it would have sold; and, to tell the truth, the public would never pronounce an opinion upon it until—mind the word *until*—some critic had passed judgment upon it. Why there's many a street player, who, if introduced upon the stage under some grand name, would bring down the house on the first night of his performance; but woe to him on the second if—mark the word *if*—the critics should happen meanwhile to expose him."

"Then the public are fools," said Edgar.

"No," replied Raffles; "it is neither their business to judge of talent nor their privilege. They must generally depend upon the judgment of persons who make it a profession. If they say a certain book is well written, the public will say so too; if the critics put the thing in the grave, the public will fill in the earth and tread it down. Have you written anything before?"

"Yes," said Edgar, "a few things, some of which have appeared—the worst of them."

"The worst of them!" exclaimed Raffles; "how do you know they were the worst?"

"As I know a horse from an ass," replied Edgar; "the difference was too apparent to be mistaken; and, moreover, one tale especially, which I wrote against time, sold immediately, while other things, upon which I had expended thought and labour, lie now in my trunk, rejected MS.S."

"Exactly," said Raffles; "and then I suppose you blamed the luckless editor for his want of discernment, whereas it was his discernment and knowledge of what would suit the public, that led him to reject it. You may rely upon it, sir, that literature is a hard profession, and to tell you the truth, if I had my time to live over again, I would rather boil cabbage and brocoli, and make made dishes (by-the-bye, let me jot that down for the scrap column), than *hash* up this literary provender. Why, sir, I have been

editor in my time of fourteen journals; what do you think of that, sir?"

"They didn't all fail, surely," said Edgar, laughing.

"Well, the first four *merged*," said Raffles, emphatically, "the next three were *transferred*, five didn't pay some how or another, and the last I gave up for the present one."

Edgar thought Raffles exceedingly communicative, but the editor was a kind-hearted man, and, as he saw in Edgar much that was characteristic of a noble nature, accompanied with that desire for literary fame which has proved the shipwreck of so many clever persons, he was desirous of warning him against any hope of gaining a livelihood by such means.

"Let me advise you," said he, "as I would my own child, to abandon literature as a profession. As an amusement, it is exceedingly pleasant and innocent—it's a mental feast, in fact, which only those are privileged to enjoy who are possessed of capacious minds; but do not think

that everything which delights *your* mind will contribute to the pleasure of another."

This was exceedingly cheering to one in Edgar's circumstances; he looked at the speaker with an expression of disappointment on his countenance, which yet indicated a full belief in the whole of the good gentleman's remarks. Edgar had flattered himself, as many thousands have, that there was a vacant pedestal for him in the temple of fame; it seemed now, however, as if he must write his honour in the dust, and pencil the name he intended to be immortal on a withered leaf.

"I do not speak to disparage, but to warn you, my young friend," continued Raffles; "in the course of my experience I have had to deal with those who have written for their bread, and a bitter task most of them found it. I have had to reject manuscript which has been stained with tears; and I assure you, it is no pleasant task to refuse papers which have been written with a hope of earning a meal for a starving family, but

I've often been obliged to do it. Editors should have iron nerves, and hearts that have no sympathy."

"And authors," said Edgar, "what should they have?"

"A large fortune," replied Raffles, "a heart proof against envy, and a face that can smile on the bitterest criticisms."

"The first I lack," said Edgar; "but for the second, it seems to me that the voice of envy is the very music that the ambitious march to; as for the third requisite, I care no more for criticism than a donkey does for whipcord."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Raffles, "ha! ha!" And then he slapped his hands on his little pudgy thighs, and gave another yet heartier "ha! ha! ha!" Another pinch of snuff, and he once more turned over the manuscript.

"All I can say is," he added, "as you have two out of the three requisites, I heartily wish you the other; but, really, there are very few who possess so much—what shall I call it, philosophy

—yes, philosophy, as not to flinch under the lash of a severe criticism from—say the 'Athenæum.' Why, my dear sir, it's like letting off a sixty-eight pounder into a man's face; he must be more than mortal, if he can stand that."

"But," said Edgar, "a criticism, however severe, doesn't alter an author's opinion of his own work. Why, isn't it well known that a woman loves her offspring the more for its being slighted?"

"Good!" replied Raffles, "good!"

"And nothing short of utter annihilation, both of author and book, can have any effect upon a man who has sufficient appreciation of his own merit; it's a good thing, Mr. Raffles, is plenty of conceit. Write your work, say I; say it's good, and stick to it—and then a pin for your sixty-eight pounder. Why, I know a gentleman that all the newspapers in the kingdom could have no more effect upon, than the bite of a flea on a rhinoceros."

"He must be a remarkable gentleman," said Raffles, "a remarkable gentleman!"

"It is no other than your own member," said Edgar.

"What, Hawkins!" exclaimed Raffles.

"The same."

"Wonderful man!" said Raffles; "you are now leaving the ordinary sphere and getting into a region that is really above—I was going to say above criticism. He is becoming the man, you know, of the day; but I never heard that he had turned his attention to literature. Has he published?"

"Not that I'm aware of," said Edgar. "I merely mention him as an instance of what I call an impregnable—"

"Fortress," said Raffles. "Ha! ha! that's very good; but, you see, he's such a benevolent, charitable, worthy fellow; everything, indeed, that is good, and I may say, great; he is an ornament to the circle in which he moves, and a credit to human nature."

"Well," said Edgar, "then I may pocket my manuscript. I thank you, however, for your courtesy, and—"

"Not at all, not at all," said Raffles, rising, and sauntering towards the fire. "I shall be very happy, indeed, to hear from you again, if you should have anything that you think likely to suit."

"Here you see authors are in a worse condition than tailors," remarked Edgar.

"Tailors!" repeated Raffles.

"Yes; you see authors can't take out their tape and measure an editor for a tale or an essay, as a tailor can for a coat, and make it to fit you like your skin."

Mr. Raffles was fond of laughing, and he laughed very heartily, and exclaimed—

"Bravo! that's rich; measure us for a tale—do you mean tail? Ha! ha! ha! ha! Oh, dear, I ought not to laugh so; the late Mrs. Raffles was always saying I laughed apoplectically—ha! ha!—apoplecti—ha! ha!—apoplecti—ha! ha! ha! Oh, dear!"

Edgar looked at the little fat man, who was doubled up into a heap, and coughing and laugh-

ing at the same time; he was a very merry and a very jocund editor, and thoroughly good-natured.

"Come, sir," said he, reaching the bell, "allow me to offer you some refreshment; I am just going to have a glass of wine."

Edgar took a glass of sherry, and was quite at home with the hospitable gentleman.

"You see," said the editor, turning the glass between his thumb and forefinger towards the window, "you, see, sir, as the late Mrs. Raffles used to say, with great emphasis—poor thing, she was a merry creature—'Mr. Raffles,why don't you publish something fresh; lead—lead the public—don't follow them.' That's all very well to say, but when you come to try the working—mind the word—when you come to try the *working*, it won't do. Ever since Nebuchadnezzar experimented on a green diet, the public taste seems to have tended downwards; now, it strikes me if you could measure three parts of the public for tails—ha! ha! ha!—well, well, I won't say

any more on the subject; it's always painful, because it reminds me of the late Mrs. Raffles, poor thing."

And the good gentleman set down his glass, and laughed once more in the most hearty and boisterous manner.

"I am fortunate enough," said Edgar, "to have found you—"

"Just as I was losing myself," said Raffles.

"In a happy humour," added the unfortunate author.

"Well, I tell you, my young friend, I'm heartily sorry that I cannot accept your copy, and really I like your humour, for as Shakespeare would say, 'it jumps with my own,' a glass of wine won't hurt us, and I drink to your next production. Send me something on—on—let me see—do you know anything of music?"

"I could write you an essay on the drum," said Edgar.

"Well, there is a head, if there's no tail," said Raffles. "Ha! ha! ha!—but if you could

send me something humourous now, not on music, but a sketch, for instance, I could try and insert it. You've plenty of humour; at all events, let me hear from you again. Mind, it must not be in your own name."

"You mean not in my *nom de plume*," said Edgar.

"*Nom de plume!*" said Raffles.

"My real name is Hindly."

"A good name, too," said Raffles; "but why then did you send me up—"

"The fact is," replied Edgar, "that is a piece of, shall I say, pious fraud."

"I don't see the devil of a bit of piety in it," said Raffles.

"I mean to say I never give my real name," continued Edgar. "My present circumstances are such that I am not—"

"Very excusable, my dear sir," said Raffles. "Hope I shall see you again, at all events; but is it Hindly, of Raymonds Park?"

"The same," said Edgar.

"By George!" exclaimed Raffles; "haven't you seen the papers?"

"All that the papers have said of my unhappy state is too well known to me; but a deeper plot of villany was never laid to entrap an innocent man."

Raffles took Edgar's hand and pressed it heartily, assuring him that if he wanted a friend he would stand by him.

"Do you want funds?" he asked.

Edgar paused for an instant.

"Yes," he said, "I want funds, or I should never have taken so bold a step as to introduce myself to you as I have; but I will accept no assistance that comes to me unearned, however generously offered."

"But I'll buy your manuscript," said the generous Raffles. "Come, here we are buyer and seller."

"But you have declined it," said Edgar;

"and, moreover, told me that it is not marketable. No, sir. I thank you from my heart, but I will not accept it."

The note which the editor offered dropped upon the floor as Edgar drew back his hand ; the old gentleman looked with a countenance that bespoke his generous nature, and a moisture glistened in his eyes.

"Why, don't you see," he said, "that before long your name will be the subject of leading articles in the papers, and your name once known to the public your pen will be transformed into a very sword to hew down prejudices, and especially with such writing as you can produce—it will *pay* me, sir, to purchase."

"Not one shilling," said Edgar. "Many, many thanks," and as he spoke he grasped the hand of the good natured Raffles heartily, and quitted the room.

Martha and Mary didn't study the newspapers to any great extent, and therefore they had not heard that their respected and almost beloved

visitor was charged with burglary. When, therefore, he presented himself in the evening, after he had quitted Raffles, they received him with the cordial welcome that was usual with them.

"We have been longing to see you, Mr. Hindly. How is our dear friend, Mr. Hawkins? What a worthy man he is," said Martha. "What a true Christian."

"I believe he is well," replied Edgar; "for myself, I suppose I shall be in prison before I see you again."

"In prison!" exclaimed the sisters.

Edgar narrated the whole proceedings from the first moment of his unhappy acquaintance with Lizzy.

For a while Martha and Mary were mute with astonishment and sorrow; there was something so horrifying to them in the circumstances that it seemed incredible that any person could lend an ear to such falsehoods. But at the name of Sir Robert Walters they looked at each other with a significant glance.

"You see," said Edgar, "they couldn't have done more for me than they have; they deprived me of my property, and now have defrauded me of my reputation, the only thing I had to fight my way with. What am I in the world without character?"

"How cruel," exclaimed Martha; "but this is not the work of your father. There is some other influence against you."

"Yes, I am sure of it," replied Edgar; "and Sir Robert Walters, I believe, is my worst enemy. He has a mortgage on Raymonds, and the estate should be mine by virtue of an unexecuted marriage settlement."

"Cheer up," said Mary, "cheer up; you must bend to the storm like a bull rush, and then it will all go over, like water off a duck's back, it will."

"I'll resist them like an oak," replied Edgar. "They shall root me up before I bend; it's all because of poor Lizzy—a father's pride and a fool's covetousness have caused it all."

As Edgar spoke a tear burst from beneath his eyelid, but he dashed it away.

"What have I done," he continued, after a pause of some moments, "that I should be persecuted in this manner?"

"It will all turn out for the best," said Martha; "don't despair, Heaven is above; as our minister says, 'it's a long lane that hath no turning.'"

"But come," said Mary, "you must now treat us to a description of this charming heroine. She must be very lovely—what's her name?"

"Wilmington," said Edgar; "as for her beauty, my eyes may have deceived me; but for her goodness, notwithstanding her birth and station, an angel only could be better. I believe her mother must have seen better days."

"Do you know who her husband was?" asked Martha.

"He was a soldier, I believe, and was killed in the peninsular. Another of those unhappy marriages, probably, that alienate a proud family

from the unfortunate member that is not willing to sacrifice the best feelings on the altar of parental authority."

"And what sort of person is the mother?" asked Martha; "is she tall or—"

"Somewhat above the middle height," replied Edgar, "with fair hair, blue eyes, and features that I should say were once beautiful; but time and sorrow have done their work."

"Where is she?" asked Mary.

"I don't know, but I am determined to find her, if possible—she was living, as I told you, at Heathmoor. It was a cruel thing to send her away; she may have starved for aught I know."

"You must promise us this, Mr. Hindly," said Martha, "that if you find them you will let us know immediately."

"You are too kind," said Edgar; "I don't know why you should feel so much interest in my wretched affairs."

"We knew your dear mother," said Mary, "as we have told you; but it was many, many years

ago, and when we saw you, the likeness you bear to her made us wonder where we had seen you: but you'll promise, won't you?"

"Gladly," said Edgar; "but if I am taken prisoner?"

"They dare not," said Mary, "they dare not."

"The triumph of Sir Robert would be complete were I taken before him on the charge. That's his aim, no doubt—but I must wish you good-bye. It may be for ever, I cannot tell; but if so, I thank you heartily for all your kindness, and may Heaven repay you—I cannot."

"Remember your promise, that's all," said Martha; "but, one moment—where does Sir Robert live?"

"At Burwell Park—Raymondsworth."

"Mr. Hindly," said Mary, "you will accept a present for poor Mrs. Wilmington in case you find her"—Edgar paused a moment, as the good-natured Mary unlocked her desk, and took out a note—"you will give her this from me, tell her it

is from a friend who will spare no pains, so far as she is able, to serve her. And, Mr. Hindly, as your mission is one of—I was going to say mercy, let me contribute towards your expenses."

A pressing necessity tempted Edgar to accept the generous offer, but the pride of his nature compelled him to refuse. Accepting only the note for Mrs. Wilmington, he wished his friends good-bye, and hurried from the room, lest the tears that were forcing themselves should betray a weakness he was anxious to conceal.

Thus seemed to terminate a friendship (for he looked upon it as their last meeting) which had commenced so strangely, and been continued with such warmth and earnestness on the part of all.

CHAPTER IV.

SOLOMON IN A "FIX."

"LET me see," said Job, as he turned over the duplicates of the deeds which he had taken from his father's strong box, "that's that, and this is—yes, that's right—that's right—now for these blessed signatures—the governor's not much of a reader, and his eyes none the better for seventy years wear—can't expect things to last for ever."

There was a short pause in his reflections, occasioned by his examination of the signatures; he then went on in his usual mode.

"Let me see—these originals must go to Gregory, and, if he's not an old fool, he'll prepare at once a deed of gift from my dad to me of the Ruxleigh Estate; then I can mortgage, and there's ready money by the thousand. By Jove! Job, thy father never had the knack of making money half so fast, and the beauty of it is, the old gentleman will be just as happy, because he'll know nothing about it, and just as rich, because I shall pay up the rents like a prince as long as he lives, and redeem as soon as he's dead—at all events, as I shall be heir-at-law to an intestate, why I shall be in with a good title to the whole concern, and Dick" (a brother) "must be contented with what I can afford to give him—at all events, there's no harm in it—no harm morally, for I shall make it all right. Now, let me see—these signatures."

With that he set himself to the task of imitating the handwriting of the various names that appeared on the original deeds, and having satisfied himself with the copies that he had made

by way of practice, commenced the work upon the duplicates, which he completed with evident satisfaction.

"That'll do," he thought, "that'll do; now let me look at the conveyance to my dad—what a stupid affair!" he exclaimed; then, whispering, "what a stupid thing to take a conveyance to such uses as he may appoint, and to be attested by two witnesses—that's a devil of a bore: but courage, Job! Fortune favours the brave, and faint heart never won—hem! Two witnesses—I shall have to manage that somehow—there must be two witnesses to the governor's signature on the deed of gift to me, or it 'll be invalid, that's clear. Now the question is, who can I get? and how shall I humbug them? They must be respectable—Friday might do for one, he's a respectable fellow enough. No, I won't; it shall be two *parsons*—two reverends—they're about the chaps, because they're too ticklish on points of honour, to attempt to read what they are signing. I'll have a dinner party, by Jove! and

the Reverend Silver Spooney will talk about it a week before he comes, and for ever after. The idea of dining with a member of Parliament like me will be something wonderful for Spooney, for I don't think the Revd. Silver Spooney ever went out to dinner in his life, and a d— good dinner won't hurt Spooney. Poor devil! they say he mends all the children's shoes and cuts their hair! I shouldn't wonder if he does the washing. Well, Silver Spooney will do for one: now for the other. There's the curate at St. Mary Ann's—how would his name look? The Reverend Peter Crawley goes in for High Church and low pay—he'll do. That 'll be high, low, Jack, and game when we get together; but, lord what a christian-hearted creature they will think me! Now, is it likely Peter Crawley will want to know what he's going to sign? Pshaw! what a deuced, inquisitive fellow he'd be!—and what member of Parliament would ever ask him to dinner after? No, no, Peter Crawley; if you crawl into my affections in such a manner, you must mind how you behave

yourself; for if ever I become Prime Minister, I might have a living or two to dispose of; and a good living wouldn't hurt you, Peter Crawley, nor Low Church Silver Spooney; and ever such a fractional part of a living—even a good dinner such as I'll give you—won't hurt you. So for once, my reverend friends, you shall taste of Bishop's cheer, and learn something of the manner in which they feed, whose crumbs you are so thankful to pick up."

Thus soliloquising, or rather mentally amusing himself, at the expense of his reverend friends, Job rubbed his hands, folded the deeds carefully, deposited them in his pocket, and was about to set off for the office of Gregory, who did such business for him as it would have been unsafe to do himself, when Friday entered with a letter.

"What the devil did you come now for, Friday?"

"What did I come for, sir," said Friday; "to bring this 'ere letter, which ha' got to be guv to you dreckly."

"Who brought it?"

"A little old man, sir, with a rusty beard and a porkpine nose."

"A what!" exclaimed Job; "what have you been reading lately? You're a pretty fellow for a secretary to a member of Parliament."

"Is I a seck-eretary, sir?" asked Friday, his eyes lighting up with peculiar brilliancy.

"Of course you is," said Job; "can you say am?"

"Yes, and eat it, too, sir."

Job was reading the note, and did not notice what his servant said. But Friday was a great favourite, and consequently was allowed to use a familiarity, which in others, Job would not have permitted. As he read the letter, a cloud overshadowed his countenance, and communicated itself to that of Friday, who was invariably gay or gloomy, according to his master's humour; his visage, therefore, instantly changed, and a look of respectful solemnity marked his features.

"Send up the bearer immediately," said Job;

and, turning from the place he had just occupied, immoveable as a statue, walked thoughtfully across the room, muttering curses and epithets by the dozen. Never had Job manifested so much excitement.

In a few minutes he heard the Jew, preceded by Friday, approaching the door.

"You may go, Friday," he said, as the servant entered the room, "to Mr. Gregory, and ask him if he can step down."

Friday was glad enough to get away.

Solomon commenced bowing in the most obsequious manner.

"What's the meaning of this, Solomon? Didn't I tell you on no account to part with that document? You have ruined Mr. Hindly, and yourself, too."

"Mine Got, shir! but vhen dey come and sheize me by de troat, and—"

"Stuff!" exclaimed Job; "you are a d—— fool. How did they know you had the papers?"

"Dere ish de myshtery," said Solomon; "de man dat shtole 'em wash at mine offish at de time, and ready to confessh every bleshed ting about de robbery."

"It's false," said Job; "he was no burglar who was there; no burglar would have done that."

"Den he wash de devil, for he knowed all 'bout it to a letter."

"The best thing for you to do," said Job, "is to pack up and leave the country, for as sure as you're alive you will be taken."

"For vat, share?" asked Solomon, with consternation."

"For receiving stolen property. I did what I could to save you, and now you have given up the evidence that would have cleared you. As sure as you're a living soul you'll be taken, unless you bolt."

"Why, dere ish de evidensh dat I come by de papersh honeshtly for my monish; dere ish de sig-*na*-ture, share."

"No use now," said Job; "take my advice, don't let them catch you."

"My monish, my monish!" exclaimed the Jew; "den I am shwindle; mine Got!"

"I will answer for that," said Job, "on the part of Mr. Hindly."

"You will, share?"

"Yes, but mind, on this condition only, that you, in case you're taken, know nothing whatever of the person who brought you that deed of deposit. Listen, Mr. Hindly's whole safety depends upon that; you know how you became possessed of the deeds themselves. I don't—but remember, if you implicate Mr. Hindly in the matter of the deed, which contains his signature, I shall defend him with a straightforward statement of the whole matter. He did not deposit those deeds with you; to my certain knowledge he did not. You have now confessed that the burglar who brought them to you, was there when the policeman entered, and was ready to own to the robbery."

"Nay, share; but you shay he was *no* burglare."

"True, *he* was not, he was a detective, acting in concert with the other; but what you say shows me that you received those parchments in a dishonest manner, knowing them to have been stolen."

"Oh, share, how *can* you?" said Solomon, plaintively.

"Your course is clear, but Mr. Hindly shall not suffer for your dishonesty."

"Dishoneshty, share. Oh, mine Got! how can you shay dat. I 'ave nevare taken vat did belong to any vun, widout de monish for it; but vat shall I do? I loshe my monish and my charactare. Nevare did dishonesht ting in my life, nevare."

"Either you must be off," said Job, "or you must swear you received the deed of the deposit with the packet. Do you understand?"

"My mout' would be dumb wid sush oat'. Could not shwear dat."

"Then see," continued Job, "how you stand? That deed bears Mr. Hindly's signature, does it not?"

"Yesh, yesh, share."

"And what does the deed say—that it is given as a memorandum of deposit herewith of certain parchment relating to the estate of Heathmoor. I believe that's so, is it not?"

"I pelief it ish to dat effect, share."

"Well, then, see where you are; the thing speaks for itself, and if you say that the packet wasn't deposited at the same time as the deed, you contradict the deed itself, and must account for the possession of the stolen property."

"Dat ish true, share; dat ish true; and if I let it shwear for itshelf, it shays dat I got dem from Mr. Hindly."

"Which would be the greatest villany you could ever be guilty of," said Job, "and would be giving a tongue of perjury to the deed, to which there could be no contradiction, unless I came forward, which I should certainly do; for the

innocent shall never suffer for the guilty through me."

"I'm in a fix," said Solomon; "in a tam trap. What wid de parchmentsh, and what wid de deed of Mr. Hindly, I shee I loshe my monish. You shay de one cannot be plead widout de oder, and de oder cannot be plead *wid* it."

"It amounts to this," said the cunning Job; "you have been foolish enough, against my advice, to part with your security."

"Vell, share, vell—"

"And, having done so, you must either let that deed of deposit convict Mr. Hindly of the burglary (of which you know he is innocent), or you must confess that he gave you that deed after you became possessed of the stolen property, in which case mind, you convict yourself."

Neither Solomon's heart nor his head was proof against this logic; his little eyes flashed, his lips quivered, and his countenance turned red and white, like burning ashes when a gust of wind passes over them. He bit his lips, pulled

his beard, and murmured to himself in curses and oaths.

"De devilish vengeance seem come to me," said he; "dat ish livin' among Christiansh; dat ish a putty relishun, dat take a poor Shew's monish like dish, and leave him to de jail. Mine Got! mine Fader Abraham, vat you tink of dish headen Shentile peoplesh? Oh, share! I would shooner be a pig dan live among dish peoplesh dat rob and plundersh widout mershy. Vat shall I do, share?"

"All that you can do safely, is what I have told you," said Job. "You know Mr. Hindly *didn't* give you the papers."

This seemed the point which Job desired most forcibly to impress upon him.

"But he gave me de deed."

"And what's that? You must show where you got the parcel, man; and whoever has given information to the police respecting you, will, of course, clear Mr. Hindly from the charge, if nothing else did. Your simple course will be

to let the whole go together, not to say that you had the deed from one and the parcel from another."

"And where den *musht* I shay I got dem from!"

"I suppose from your famous butterman," replied Job.

Solomon saw clearly enough that his dilemma was too great to extricate himself from; never was fly more completely enveloped in the spider's web than was Solomon in the meshes which Job had so dexterously thrown around him. Like a detected thief, he saw that flight would be his best, if not his only means of escape; and as he continued to pull his beard and bite his lips, he little thought how keenly Job was searching into his mind, and with what anxiety he was watching the effect of his strategy.

To Job it was more than fame or fortune that Solomon should be driven from the scene; for if he should be placed in the witness-box, there was the utmost probability that a cross-examination

would unravel the whole, and disclose the perfidy and forgery of which he had been guilty. As soon, therefore, as he saw Solomon hesitate, Job advised him to leave London without delay.

"Look," said he, "you have been a good friend to me and Mr. Hindly. We should both be sorry to see you in difficulties on our account. Go. I will guarantee the money you have advanced, and if you like, will give you a portion."

Solomon's eyes twinkled; he would have gone to the devil for money, if he could have received anything like an assurance of ever coming back. He clutched the fifty pound note, therefore, that was placed before him, and was about leaving, when Job called him.

"Solomon!"

"Yesh, share."

"You had better get your beard and whiskers shaved off as soon as you can."

"De vare ting, share, I wash going to do."

"And pack up your—"

"Dat ish all done, share, at vunce; I 'ave packed up and 'ave left mine loge dish tree days."

Thus saying, he shuffled out of the room.

"An artful old devil," said Job; "he has bested me after all, and yet I've filled him as full of fear as a bubble is of air; no telling what he might have done but for my reasoning with him. I think I've shown him the law, too—vile, cunning, infernal, d—— rogue. There never lived such a thief; saint and devil's alike to him when money's to be had."

Thus thought the upright Job, who had an abhorrence of everything that approached dishonesty; especially when he saw it in one who had him at such an advantage as the old Jew. His next thoughts were what Solomon would do with the securities, but he suddenly came to the conclusion that all of them that were marketable had long since been disposed of.

Job and Edgar had had proofs enough of his custom with respect to bills; for, as certainly as

they fell due, they were presented from some other person.

It was not long before Friday returned, and informed his master that Mr. Gregory would wait upon him in a "jiffy," a term he frequently used in the tap-room of the "Green Dragon." I ought, however, to observe that when Job went into Parliament, Friday went into the "Green Dragon" parlour, consorting no longer with the lower orders, but finding his companions now among people of no less importance than parish beadles, master green-grocers, and the like.

Luncheon was prepared, and by the time Gregory arrived, Job was ready for consultation. The deeds were examined by the practical and professional Gregory, and everything was soon arranged in the most straightforward manner. It is true Gregory never mentioned the elder Hawkins, save by way of a complimentary enquiry as to his health; although Job *did* ask him if he thought it would be necessary to see "the Governor." Whether Gregory understood the

reason of the question, it is not necessary to enquire; his reply was that there was no occasion to see him, as the letter of instructions which Job handed to him, purporting to bear his father's signature, was sufficient for all purposes. The interrogation was intended to prevent suspicion, although there was really little to fear.

"The execution," said Gregory, "must be attested by two witnesses."

"Exactly," said Job.

"Will you take it to your father for execution, or shall I?"

"It's immaterial," said Job, "perhaps there's no telling when the old gentleman will be at home; you see by his letter he is now at Brighton. If you let me have it I'll take it to him."

"Very well," said Gregory.

"And when will it be ready?"

"Say Friday."

Thus was arranged another forgery, perhaps the deepest in which Job had yet been engaged, only to be surpassed by another, the cunning and

boldness of which are without a parallel in the annals of crime.

As soon as Gregory was gone, Job repaired once more to his father's villa, little dreaming that it would be his last interview with the old man; that he would never more look upon him in life again, and that the next scene of the drama would be one of the most awful solemnity, and of the basest villany.

But Job never indulged in presentiments; confident of success, by whatever means he attempted to achieve it, his prospects were always splendid, and certain of realization: during all his career, remorse never disturbed him; he looked complacently from the towering height of his ambition, upon the mountain of guilt below, but to him it was the merest molehill. And, if proof were wanting of the obtuseness of his feelings, not only with regard to the crimes he was perpetrating, but with reference to the persons he was irreparably injuring by them, it would be found in the demeanour which he assumed during the

last interview with his father; a man whose whole life had been devoted to the acquisition of money, but who yet possessed many of the kindlier feelings of humanity, the most apparent of which was his affection for Job.

The old man had long been separated from his wife, a sorrowful woman, whose life had been embittered by the misfortune of her early days. It is due to Job to say that he loved his unfortunate mother, and stood by her with great devotion, although he had little affection for his father. It is true that he knew nothing of his illegitimacy, but he regarded Mrs. Hawkins as an injured woman, who had been driven from her home by the arbitrary temper of the man she had loved, and deprived of the society of her children. Job had often requested the stern old man to receive her again into his family, but without effect. She was wearing out the grey days of her life in worse than childless comfort, repining over a past which had been lost, and hoping for nothing in the future but the success of her children. Job

(from the very misfortune of his birth), had ever been the object of her deepest solicitude, and while her heart expanded with pride at his success, she felt with shame and remorse, that a day must come when he would know *all*. No one can picture her in her lonely cottage, sighing over the recollections of the past, and dreading that gloomy future, without a feeling of sympathy for her as the injured and betrayed. The beauty which had blighted her life had faded long enough before time had cast his shadow on her brow. She lived in repentance that brought her no solace; and the more she experienced of her son's affection, the more poignant was her grief. Job had never neglected her; his visits were frequent, and with delight he unfolded to her his prospects and his success, buoyant and daring as the eaglet when it first tries its wings and soars to the summit of the mountain rock, preparatory to a bolder flight. Mrs. Hawkins, though listening with a mother's pride to his plans, unfolded only to her, with the prudence of a cautious woman,

advised him against being too sanguine. And had Job, in his earlier career, possessed the companionship of his mother, he might have pursued a course which would have brought him honor and fame.

As Job entered his father's room, he perceived a marked change in the old man's countenance; a change which, to one more anxious for his welfare, would have occasioned some concern.

"You are not looking so well, governor?"

"Ay, ay," said the old man. "I knows all about it; but as soon as I gets rid of my cough I shall be well enough—it's only the cough now."

The old man was sensitive on the subject of his health, probably on account of his reluctance to leave a world which contained the only god he had ever worshipped; he was therefore usually short tempered at an unfavourable remark on that subject; proving that the world, however delightful in itself, is an unstable basis for happiness to rest on.

Job knew it was *only* his cough, and that if he could get rid of it he would probably live many years; but the cough was never to be cured, it was wearing out his feeble frame.

"Have you tried the 'Live for ever lozenges?'" he asked.

"Tried the lozenges!" said Hawkins, peevishly, "What's the use o' these 'ere new fangled nicknacks? why when I were a boy like you we never thought o' these sweetmeat things."

"You didn't have coughs *then*, I suppose," said Job.

"There! you don't know *what* we had; we had better things then, a good deal, than now; there was times when *money* could be made."

"I don't think you have any reason to complain on that score," said Job, "you are making money almost as fast as you could shovel it up if it were on the roadside."

"But what's the use, boy—the taxes—the taxes eats it up; the taxes, I say, is a kuss to the nation, don't want 'em; people don't want *taxes*, we

wants the good old times, they never took half as much as these here new fashioned liberals—these here liberals is a kuss to the kuntry—stick to toryism, boy—stick to toryism, it's the way to get on; thee wast *born* a tory, Job; *born* a tory, mind that."

"I know it," answered the honorable member, "and I'll die one!"

"Wast always a good boy, Job; give's thy hand."

Job obeyed, and the old man grasped it warmly. "Now, mind," he continued, "never vote for the liberals; stick up for the old school, and that's the way to get on."

"A tory for ever!" said Job, "down with the radicals, down with the liberals, and down with the taxes."

"That's it," said the old man, almost overcome with his son's enthusiasm, "stick to that text, Job, and thee'll be a great man,—but here, what of Ridley's place?"

"It's all settled," replied Job, "I paid the deposit, you know; the cheque which you gave me—"

"Right, and—"

"And have got all ready for conveyance; they are only waiting for the remainder of the purchase money."

"Has the Company took the lease, boy?"

"They are ready to do so, as soon as we are in a position to grant it; which will be when the money is paid."

"But here," said Hawkins, "you can have the money, Job."

"First of all," said the wily son, "let me give you the deeds I took to—"

"Oh, did'st find 'em right?"

"Quite right; the lease taken and all satisfactorily settled."

"And how much rent will that make, Job?"

"About ten thousand per annum."

"Per devil!" said Hawkins, "why canst thee

say *year*; these new fangled words, Job; stick to toryism, don't I say? *per ammun*, who's to know what thee means by that?"

"Well, it's the legal phraseology, you know, that's all."

"Legal *what?*" exclaimed the old man, whose frequent attacks of cough and pinches of rheumatism made him more irritable than usual.

"It's the way we express ourselves," said Job, "but you'll have four thousand a year from these two estates as soon as we've paid the rest of the purchase money."

"That's a good boy, now let's see. Oh dear, dear, where am I? my cheque book."

"Shall I get it for you?" asked Job, the old man being almost unable to rise.

"*You* get it! what for? Why I be worth a dozen young uns now, I be."

"Good," replied the son, at the same time selecting a good pen.

The cheque was drawn for four thousand five hundred pounds; and as the old man slid it across

the table, he begged that great care should be taken of it. Job next undid the brown paper wrapper containing the duplicate deeds, which had been forged and substituted for the real. He was somewhat reluctant to unfold them, although he knew that the possibility of detection was extremely remote.

"Here they are," he said, "I think if you count them you'll find them right?"

"I dare say they be, boy; put 'em in the strong box, and take your memorandum. Mind it's locked up safe."

"It's all right," said Job, "I've put them down at the left hand corner, just on the top of the Busby Farm papers."

"That'll do, boy."

Job felt as secure as if the original deeds themselves were there, and once more resumed his seat and the conversation. But he little expected the turn it was about to take. He knew the old man was as averse to dying as human nature could possibly be; that as a probable consequence of

that aversion, he would regard *will making* as a setting the house in order preparatory to departure. It was the last thing therefore he expected the old man to do, and confidently hoped that he would put it off till it was too late. His surprise may be imagined when Hawkins addressed himself to the subject.

"Dost know, Job, I bin thinking about maken a will? they ha' bin botherin' me 'bout it, and—"

"Who's been bothering you about it,—*Dick?*"

"The lawyer."

"What, Bloomsbury?"

"Ah, Bloomsbury! Yer know, Job, I like thee all alike, and when I be gone—"

"There, I can't bear to hear you talk of dying, father!"

"Wast always a good boy, Job; and I don't think I be like a dying man yet; be I, lad?"

"You know the saying that we have in 'the House?'"

"How should I know what saying thee be got in the 'ouse?"

"Why, that a good old tory never says 'die!'"

"Not he," said Hawkins, "I'll warrant, not he."

"That a tory is like an oak—"

"Ay, so ur be, boy."

"And that his very bark is more solid than the trunk of the liberal, who sprouts up like the willow, and is good for nothing but to make toys with."

"That be good," said Hawkins. "It's as old as the world."

"Right," answered Job; "Adam was a Tory."

"So he were, boy; and, mind you, it's the only thing to get a man on in the world."

"Well," said Job, "I shall stick to my principles, and, as I always tell them, I'm a Tory, and so was my father before me."

"Did thee tell em that in the House, boy?"

"I did," said Job.

The old man paused as if his mind suddenly returned to the subject of the will, or some un-

happy thought disturbed him. In truth he had resolved upon acquainting Job with the unfortunate circumstance connected with his birth; but the dread of his son's displeasure restrained him. A sigh escaped his lips, which was not unobserved by the son.

"Have you seen my mother lately?" asked Job.

"There!" exclaimed Hawkins, pettishly; "not very lately I haven't. What dost thee ask for?"

"Because I would like to see you happy."

"Happy! and dost think I can't be happy without her?"

"Not quite happy, father."

"She can come here when she likes," said Hawkins, "and do come when her mind runs that way, which be about whenever her money comes due; but, mind thee, she ain't agoing to have thirds, Job—no such stuff as that. I'll settle it so as it's never to be sold as long as the world stands. That's good Toryism ain't it?"

"It may be good Toryism," said Job; "but it's bad law."

"Bad law!" exclaimed the old man; "can't a man do what he likes with his own?"

"To a certain extent, not to an uncertain extent," said Job. "You can't tie it up for a longer time than the lives of people living at your death, and twenty-one years after; that's all you can do by a will."

"And if I don't make a will?"

"It will descend from heir to heir."

"That's it then, that's what I want; and they can't sell!"

"Yes, they can sell," answered Job, "if they're so foolish."

"Then I'd have a clause barrin' em from sellin'; it shall go on to all 'ternity in the family."

"Very well," answered Job, "I have nothing to do with it; your wishes shall be obeyed, and instead of taking from the property I'll add to it."

"That's it boy—that's what I want."

"But if you leave it by will you can only do as I say."

After thus insinuating his plan, Job affected the utmost indifference to the whole affair.

"Well, governor," he added, rising to take his leave; "you are not like a dying man yet, thank heaven, and I hope and trust you'll live till we've eradicated these abominable whigs from the land!"

"I should like to see the last of 'em," said Hawkins. "Well, good-bye, Job. Now take care of that cheque; hast got it safe?"

"It's all right."

"Thee'dst better sew un in the coat collar," added Hawkins.

Job smiled, and assuring his father once more that he knew how to take care of it, bade him good-bye. As he left the room he heard the old man for the last time utter the words—

"Wast always a good boy, Job."

CHAPTER V.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

Edgar left London and pursued his long journey on foot. He had sold and pledged his articles of jewellery. His determination now was to find Lizzie; and, after clearing himself of the crime with which he was charged, to leave England for ever. He had fallen into the train of reasoning common to young men of proud and ambitious minds; especially those who are conscious of a superior intellect, which they expect will bring them fame and distinction. He had argued him-

self into the belief that nature had endowed him with the capacity to achieve success, but that Fortune and the world had obstructed him in the pursuit of it. The consequence was, that he looked with contempt on the country which refused him the reward of his work; measuring, as he did, the value by his desires, rather than his efforts. Others, he thought, had won the laurels of Fame without one quarter of the merit which, it seemed, he possessed. He had not yet learnt the lesson so bitter to all aspirants for the world's honours, that true fame is only to be achieved by arduous labours and unflinching determination; that many disappointments must be borne; that "he must be content to see the labour of years swept away, the fondest hopes defeated, and, as the fabric of ambition rises, to see it again and again levelled to its foundations." The world may be dazzled with a meteor, but you cannot satisfy it with a shadow.

As Edgar left the din of London behind, and emerged on to the quiet and breezy heath, he

began to look with contempt not only on the world that denied him fame, but also on fame itself. What was fame after all, that one should struggle for it? And what was popular applause? Those were happiest who sought nothing, lived for nothing, cared for nothing; those most miserable who had aspirations never to be realised. Why clamber up the mountain side through all its rough and almost impervious thickets, when he might enjoy life to the full by reclining in the plain below. Only fools sought fame; anxious nights and arduous days, a restless pillow and a weary mind, were the rewards of those who sought the praises of mankind.

So Edgar's pen should rust in the stand, before he would commit himself again to the work of giving an idea to the world. Edgar's reasoning was that of a disappointed man; and, if he had reflected a moment upon the issue between him and the world, he would not only have abandoned his arrogant notions, but set himself to the work of amending his case. The facts were simple, and

may be soon told. His complaint was that the world had neglected him, had shown itself indifferent to his labours, regardless of his talents, and ungrateful for his performances; he resolved, therefore, to abandon it to itself. The fact was that Edgar and the world had made no bargain; there was no contract that he should supply a certain quantity of literature and receive for it a certain amount of admiration by way of recompense. The world knew nothing at all about the author or his works; he had voluntarily given out so much manuscript, which it was not bound to admire or pay for.

At length Edgar came to the conclusion that all depended upon Fortune's smile. He looked at Job, and drew a contrast between his friend and himself. Job was a man who had begun life with no better auspices than he; his income was scanty to a contemptible degree; but he was a pet of Fortune; everything prospered with him; he possessed the wand of Fate; he had billed it heavily, but every bill had been met somehow at

its presentment; he was in Parliament, not only on the road to eminence, but *there*.

As these reflections passed through his mind he caught sight in the distance, of a horseman who was coming at a brisk rate down the hill which bounded his view. The circumstance was a relief, for there is nothing more saddening to a solitary man than brooding over imaginary wrongs. As the horseman came up, Edgar perceived that he was mounted on a splendid animal nearly thoroughbred. The rider was elegantly dressed; possessed a fine form, a handsome dark face, with large whiskers falling nearly to the shoulders.

"Good mornin', sir," said the horseman, pulling up his horse with much difficulty.

Edgar answered in a tone that displayed more surprise than courtesy.

"You don't know me, sir."

"It would be strange if I did," said Edgar, "seeing that—but stay, I think I've some recollection of—no, no," he added, "I am mistaken."

"I am different dressed than when I spoke to you 'afore, Mr. Hindly."

"You know me, then," said Edgar, "that's certain; perhaps you will favour me with your name."

"Harrington," said the stranger.

And as he spoke, a smile at Edgar's astonishment lit up his swarthy countenance.

"You the gipsy I met on the common near Heathmoor?" exclaimed Edgar.

"The same. I knowed you, sir, long afore I got up to yer. You are s'prised at my difference."

"In truth I am," answered Edgar; "I should think the very devil never so changed himself,—and a horse of that stamp, too."

As he spoke, Edgar stepped a little back from the animal, for the purpose of examining him.

"Yes," said the gipsy, "it's a different cretur from the 'acks you see by our tents."

"Nothing more perfectly changed than your

appearance," said Edgar; "but how is all this?"

"Soon told," said the gipsy; "we are boys, you know, sir, that's obleeged to make up by our wits what we wants in pocket; you see what a little it takes to make a gen'man—a good coat, and a good horse, and the devil would 'ardly know yer, al'ays 'ceptin' the drorin' room, where I should be found out, as sure as my horse hisself, unless I was on a horse's back."

"But what does all this mean?" asked Edgar.

"It means jest this," answered the gipsy, "that I've made a jolly good deal, and are guin' to Tatsal's to sell agin."

"The deuce!" exclaimed Edgar. "Tattersall's, do you sell there?"

"Why not, sir? Don't I live in a big park, and ain't I got a fine place; and when I gets to Tatsal's, ain't I a 'spectable-looking servant o' my own, and don't I talk about master, that's all."

Edgar smiled.

"Why, sir, did yer think I were a feller that never see a hotel, and didn't know how to call for a dinner? I can do it, sir."

"You can, eh?"

"I can so, and 'ave the waiters techin' their 'ats to me as I goes out—ha! ha! but it's good fun, too, Mr. 'indly; it only shows yer what flunkeyism be—the beggar on horse back yer know."

"Rides to the devil, eh?"

"Not if he's sich a beggar as me, but rides straight up to a hinn, and cracks his whip on the lamp outside, and calls out like a 'untsman, 'Lan'lord! orseler! halloa! there, where be yer, ye knaves all gone to sleep, I'll warrant; or, Bring us a glass of grog—quick—and a sigar.'"

"That's it, is it?"

"That's it, sir; lor, they'll beg your pard'n for not comin' afore you called; but that's not the way with us chaps; we don't come with no call to no man, we don't. What's the noos, sir?

I've 'eerd a mighty lot syne I see yer, but I dissay you've 'eerd all about un, and how the pleece is about after nobody knows who, you an' me, an' everybody."

"You mean the robbery," said Edgar.

"Ha, as they calls it," said the gipsy; "they calls it a robbery, but it's what we chaps calls a friendly visit to the Heathmoor parties."

"A friendly visit," said Edgar; "did the keeper think so?"

"By all 'counts," answered the gipsy; "it were a mercy they wern't tied up by the necks instead o' the legs; but it's a singler thing, sir, they should ha' pitched on you as doin' it—you and me, ain't it now?"

"But since they have done so," said Edgar, "isn't it still more singular that you should venture—"

"Venter!" exclaimed the gipsy with a laugh; "why, what do you think, sir; I smoked a pipe only the last night as ever was, with the constable at 'eathmoor, in the large room there at the

'Talbot,' and I bleeve I were the biggest gen'leman there; you would ha' laughed if you'd ha' seen me tellin' the constable where to go and git the gipsies; lor! I was like a prince among 'em. I knows all their rigs; and what d'ye think, it's you they wants, cause as I believe of the young ooman as that was stayin' there, and that's why as that d—— keeper swears to your a bein' in the room when he wor tied up; there's somethin' 'll come out, mind me, sir."

"But what of the young woman?"

"What! why, didn't your honour know as that ere keeper was sent to marry her, and I caught him just as he wur in the middle of his little game. Didn't I fetch him a floorer! I thought he'd a died."

"What do you mean?" asked Edgar.

"Yer honor needn't be alarmed; there were no 'arm done, for I wor in the werry nick o' time."

He then proceeded to narrate the circumstances which have already been told.

"Do you know where she is?" asked Edgar.

"No, but I bleeves I could find her if she's in England or Scotland, but she's miles from Heathmoor, anyhow."

Edgar's business at Heathmoor was at an end; but an irresistible impulse urged him to pursue his journey, in spite of the gipsy's advice to the contrary.

"I shall go to the place," said Edgar; "I can have nothing to fear from the villains."

"It's true you be innercent," said Harrington, "but it might get some other chaps into a mess to clear yer; it's a unlucky job, arter all."

"What do you mean?"

"I means as it looks as if them deeds was took because you wanted 'em, that's all," answered the gipsy, carefully observing the effect his remark produced.

Edgar paused.

"Will you do me a favour?"

"Sure enough will I, yer honour, any mortal thing in the world."

"Then I shall go to Heathmoor," he said, "and in the event of my being taken, will you endeavour to find out the lady you saved?"

The gipsy's eye brightened, and his look expressed his answer.

"I'll find her, I'll warrant," he said.

Edgar took the letter from his pocket, and a sheet of paper, on which he wrote a few words to Lizzy; enclosed it in an envelope, and handed them to the gipsy.

"I know I can trust you; give her these."

"All right, sir; you'll see there's honesty in us; but mind, sir, what you do at Heathmoor; they don't 'spect yer there, I can tell yer; and the landlord of the hinn 'll be all right, I'm sure o' that; he speaks of yer as if he'd been yer own father."

"I have no fear," said Edgar, and wished the gipsy good morning.

The latter moved the rein, and his horse dashed over the green sward, with a speed that soon

carried him into the valley which stretched towards London ; so that, when Edgar looked back after a few minutes, he was just discernible in his ascent of the hill beyond.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SECRET.

The report of the burglary had circulated throughout the country, and of course reached the seaside village where Lizzy was staying. Indignation filled her breast when she heard the accusation against her lover, and at once she concluded that the whole affair was but a malicious device of Thornbury and his employer. Without delay, she resolved once more to proceed to Heathmoor, assured of the protection of the good people of the inn.

Mrs. Wilmington, no less anxious than her daughter, acquiesced in Lizzy's project, and made preparations for the journey.

The reader is probably aware that, in country villages, scarcely a day passes without a visit from some itinerant vendor of the innumerable articles of merchandise which form the stock-in-trade of the wandering pedlar.

It was the afternoon of the day on which Lizzy and her mother had determined on their journey, that one of these hawkers stopped at the fisherman's cottage; and, as is usual, without taking the customary answer, displayed his pack of miscellaneous commodities with the wonted commendations of each particular article. As the good housewife indulged her curiosity, without any intention of purchasing, Lizzy glanced at the stalwart and swarthy pedlar, and, with a shriek of surprise, ran forward to greet the gipsy who had saved her life.

"Lady!" said the gipsy, rising from the articles he was displaying.

"Mother, mother!" exclaimed Lizzy, "see here is the good man that rescued me from Thornbury. Oh, I'm so glad to see you again and to thank you!"

"Bless the lady," said the gipsy, "I'm glad to see yer too; but I be mortal sorry thee be hereabouts."

"Why?"

"*He* be here somers," answered the gipsy; "take care lady, don't wenter out arter night fall; sure as thee be alive, he's for no good to yer."

Lizzy turned pale.

"By the life o' me, he's a willain," said the gipsy, "and ye maun take care."

"We're going to Heathmoor," said Mrs. Wilmington.

The gipsy shook his head and seemed for a moment to lose himself in thought. What was passing through his mind it is not possible to say, unless his words may afford a clue.

"Why don't yer have un up, lady; yer life ain't safe?"

"I dare not," said Lizzy. "Oh, mother, what shall I do?"

"Well, look 'ee," said the gipsy, "this ain't a good place for tellin' a secret, but if the lady won't mind my jest steppin' inside I'll tell yer." With this he pulled off his slouched hat, and flinging it among his wares, lifted his pack and walked into the cottage.

"What is it, what is it? Oh, pray tell us?" asked Lizzy.

"Yer know," said the gipsy, "we be a rum people as I've told yer, but the worst o' men don't alays live in tents. Now d'ye think I could be trusted with a waleble on the chance o' finding out the party it wor sent to, in my goin' up and down in the country?"

"I don't understand you," said Lizzy.

"And then you couldn't bleeve as I got somut for yer, lady as yer'll like more than all this here pack of stuff."

"For me ? for me ?" said Lizzy.

"You'll see if my words be true," said the gipsy, taking from his pocket a small packet which was addressed in the handwriting of Edgar.

Lizzy was dumb with astonishment and joy, scarcely believing her eyes. "Edgar!" she at length exclaimed, as she took the letter, and turning from the group, broke open the seal. "Mother, here is something for you." She glanced through the brief contents, thrust the note into her pocket, and as the tears glistened in her eyes, exclaimed—

"You have *seen* Mr. Hindly?"

"Sure have ur," answered the gipsy.

"He is accused of robbery," said Lizzy, scarcely able to articulate the words.

"I know he be," said the gipsy.

"But Oh, if they arrest him!" and she clasped her hands and pressed the letter to her lips.

Mrs. Wilmington meanwhile had opened the one enclosed for herself, and to her extreme sur-

prise found it was from a very old friend who had been with her in India, who was bridesmaid at her marriage, and of whom for years she had lost sight; it was signed "Martha."

There was a confusion of ideas, and a great deal of joy; projects, plans, hopes, anxieties, in rapid succession, but in no order, passed through the old lady's mind; the news was like a dream, and it was impossible to comprehend or realize the strange circumstances which had so suddenly transpired; it was more than romance, it was mystery. Where, how, and when such a strange blending of chances could have taken place was more incomprehensible than the yet unrealized facts themselves.

"Where did you get this?" asked Mrs. Wilmington.

"Nay," said the gipsy, "that ain't to be told —must guess."

"You have seen him," said Lizzy. "You have seen Mr. Hindly?"

"Der want any more o' these things?" asked

the gipsy, smiling, "if not I must be off, so I'll tie up the pack." And as he flung it over his shoulder he once more advised Lizzy to take care of herself, and by all means to "look out for Thornbury."

"Oh, but you must tell me where Mr. Hindly was!" said Lizzy.

"He wor where he ain't now," answered the gipsy, "and if I told ye the spot, lady, ye wouldn't be more the wiser for it; good-bye, lady, this night there'll be a tale gae round that'll be told in the camp for many a year to come, I warrant; but I tell yer, take care, for he means no good, lady!"

"But do tell me where Mr. Hindly is?" said Lizzy.

"I dunnow," replied the gipsy, "and while the dogs be on the scent—"

"But surely there's no harm in my knowing."

The gipsy shook his head. "I'll do all I can for yer, and Mr. Hindly too."

"How do you think of finding us?" asked Mrs. Wilmington.

"The gipsy knows amaist the roost o' every bird, and I'se warrant to find the man in the moon, if I set my mind on it."

"But how can they charge Mr. Hindly with this robbery?" asked Lizzy. "Oh, if he should be taken!"

"Don't 'ee see," said the gipsy, "it's all Thornbury's doin', and the man that lives over by Raymonds; and if ye guv Thornbury his desarts ye'd make a marvlous heap an him; but yer know best—yer know best."

"Do you say Thornbury is *here?*" said Lizzy.

"Ha, if it ain't Thornbury, it's the devil!" replied the gipsy.

"What can he want?" exclaimed the terrified girl, "what have I done that he hunts me thus?"

"Is it Heathmoor ye'll go to?" asked the gipsy, once more throwing his bundle from his shoulder, and manifesting in his dark counten-

ance a generosity which one could scarcely believe belonged to his rude and despised race.

"Yes," said Lizzy, after a slight hesitation.

"Then, if ye'll let me, I'm the man to see yer safe."

"To Heathmoor?" exclaimed Lizzy, "will you—" she checked herself.

"Ha, I know what yer means," answered the gipsy, "but I *dare* go to Heathmoor, and there's not a village or town that I don't dare enter, as free as rain. I tell yer I'll go to Heathmoor with yer; and I'd like to meet this villain keeper on the road."

"No, no!" said Lizzy. "Heaven forbid. Mother, you will not fear under the protection of this good man,—but, why do you take such trouble for us?" she added, "for us, who can make you no recompense, save—"

"The recompense is paid," said the gipsy, "don't speak 'bout that; Mr. Hindly have done me a good turn."

"Turn!" said Lizzy.

"Ha! sure have he, he saved the life of my bairn; he saved her precious life, my only child! God bless him, and you, lady, for his sake; I'll tell yer all about it on the road; but yer mustn't walk, I'll have a mule for yer that'll be as glad to carry yer as ever his master is to go wi' yer. I'll have un here to-night; when the moon's over the cliff there I'll be near handy."

There was a romantic manner in the gipsy, as he said this, which recalled to Lizzy's mind much of what she had read of the singular people to whom he belonged; his mode of indicating the time was characteristic; the hours of their appointments were marked, their journeys measured, and their whole time regulated by natural objects; they contemned with peculiar prejudice the whole system of social life, esteeming themselves independent in the widest sense of the term; being neither the slaves of luxury nor the parasites of wealth.

"But will you not fear to take us thither?" asked Lizzy, "when you know that Mr. Hindly

is accused of all this in consequence—in consequence of me?"

"*Fear!*" said the gipsy, "*fear*, the *coward* fears; the man wot robs the poor, fears; the man wot hoards up his money, fears; the poor wretch wot lives under the shadder of his master's frown, fears; not us, wot enjoys God's freedom, and cares no more for the rich than we does for the poor little squarrel wot builds up in the trees, or the rabbit wot digs out its home in the warren; we doesn't fear lady, we doesn't fear nothin' nor nobody."

As the gipsy finished speaking, a smile of triumph passed over his face like a sunbeam; he lifted his pack, and was leaving, when Mrs. Wilmington spoke—

"I think Lizzy, we had better go to Raymonds,—nay, stop—this letter; Oh this letter! no, I must see my old friend first in London. Lizzy, I will soon tell you the secret."

"Do, do, mother; now!"

"That'll be all in your road for London, ma'am,"

said the gipsy, "ye can take the coach from the public-'ouse where the young lady wants to go."

"Yes," said Mrs. Wilmington, "that will do."

Having thus arranged, the gipsy left, promising once more his guidance and protection for the journey.

"This is extraordinary," said Mrs. Wilmington; "you have heard me speak of Martha Grundy?"

"Oh yes, often, mother—who was she?"

"She was the daughter of Colonel Grundy, who was killed in India, and was at that time, together with her sister, in the East. Poor things! they were left orphans at an early age; their mother died when they were only ten years old. The Colonel (who was a captain then) was extremely fond of them, and when his regiment was ordered abroad, determined to take them with him. Never was a parent blessed with lovelier or better children."

"Were you in India at the time, mother?"

"Yes, and we were like sisters; they were

with me when you were born, and Martha was the first that nursed you."

"And did they know my father?" asked Lizzy, with an irrepressible curiosity.

"Yes," said Mrs. Wilmington, hiding her face in her handkerchief, and sobbing so bitterly that her daughter was alarmed.

"What is it, dear mother? what mystery is there about my father that you always cry when his name is mentioned?"

"You'll know all one day, my child," said her mother.

"I've knowed your mother in better days," said the fisherman's wife; "I knowed her when the—"

"Nay," said Mrs. Wilmington, checking her, "do not recall those times; I beg of you let them be forgotten if they can be."

"And what of Martha, after her father's death, mother?"

"She and her sister returned to England, as I

believed; but never till this hour have I heard a syllable respecting them."

"But you might have enquired?"

"No, my child—I came to England a poor friendless woman, without a shilling to help me, and with only the jewels which belonged to my poor mother to subsist upon—I could never seek those whose happier circumstances would make me feel as a beggar before them."

"You must have had an immense quantity of jewellery, mother."

"I had, my love, at least two thousand pounds worth, although, of course, it did not realize a quarter of that sum."

"And how came you at Raymonds?—that was rather singular, was it not?"

"There was a dear old clergyman, who was a distant relation of my mother's, and who was acquainted with Mr. Hindly."

"And he spoke for you to Mr. Hindly."

"Mrs. Hindly was a very nice, charitable

woman, and it was through her that we were given the cottage at Raymonds."

"Then my father was a gentleman?" said Lizzy; "an officer?"

"He was an officer," said Mrs. Hindly.

"And fell in the Peninsula—didn't he make any provision for you?"

"None—but—you mustn't ask me any more now," said Mrs. Wilmington. "We must see Martha: it were better, I think, to leave Heathmoor, and go to London at once."

"But," said Lizzy, scarcely knowing how to finish the sentence.

"Well, what, dear?"

"If poor Edgar is at Heathmoor?"

"Haven't you given up the hope, my dear, of seeing him again? You know what you said when we left Heathmoor—what you promised Mrs. Hindly?"

"She refused my promise—she encouraged—"

"No, Lizzy, do not say that, lest—"

"Lest what, mother?"

"Lest you prejudice her memory by saying it."

"That cannot be," answered Lizzy; "she was too good to leave a bad name behind her, the very flowers upon her grave are not more pure than she was. And why may I not yet hope for Edgar? You say now that I am well born: but that—that is nothing to him—he would not love me a bit the more if I were a princess—he has often told me so."

"Well, my dear, we will go to Heathmoor; but I would rather that Edgar should come to you than—"

"Look, mother, here in this letter! see, the very stamp and reflection of his heart."

"Bless the girl!" said Mrs. Wilmington. "You have kept the letter as close in your bosom as though it were an infant you were screening from the wind."

Lizzy drew it forth, but once more glanced at its contents before presenting it to her mother.

"That's like him, that's like him!" said Mrs.

Wilmington; "noble-hearted youth! How strange! how extraordinary that he should have met with Martha! of all persons in the world the very last I should have expected him to know. Now, Lizzy, I will carry out my plans; the plot of my life is ready to unfold, and Heaven shall restore us, my dear child, to our rights. My God, I thank Thee for this hour, for this mercy."

As she spoke, she clasped her hands and looked upwards, while the gratitude she expressed with her lips was visible in every feature.

"Oh! mother, do—do tell me," said Lizzy; "I shall never sleep till I know this great secret, this life mystery—what is it?"

Mrs. Wilmington looked at her daughter, and the tears rushed into her eyes; she leaned forward and clasped her with a fondness which almost looked like frenzy.

"My dear mother!" said Lizzy, "what is it? why do you keep me in this suspense?"

"Hear, then, my own, my darling child," said

the mother; "but first promise me that you will not divulge what I am going to tell you, without my consent."

"Oh yes, yes, my dear mother, faithfully."

"Not to Edgar, even."

"Not to Edgar—no—no."

"Your father, then, is alive, my dear!"

"Alive! alive! mother!" exclaimed the girl. "My father alive!—where, who, how?"

Mrs. Wilmington paused, and seemed to shudder at the change of her daughter's countenance.

"Where, where does he live, mother?"

"At Burwell!" said Mrs. Wilmington.

Lizzy repeated the words over again, while the intensity of her curiosity increased every moment, and she seemed half bewildered.

"*Sir Robert Walters is your father and my husband!*" added Mrs. Wilmington.

"My dear mother, how can it be?—you dream—this long series of troubles has bewildered you; my own mother, you are mistaken—you must be."

"We shall see, my love, we shall see!" said Mrs. Wilmington.

"But why didn't you tell him so? and how can you prove it?"

"One question will answer the other," said Mrs. Wilmington. "I had till this moment no proof to rest my claim on—but here is a letter from Martha, who, with her sister, were the only witnesses of our marriage—and, moreover, it was during our residence at Raymonds that I became acquainted with the fact of Sir Robert Walters being the person whom I suspected he was."

"But he is married," said Lizzy, "and Lady Walters—"

"Is not his wife—he is a bigamist, my dear," replied Mrs. Wilmington, "but I don't wish to charge him with that, for your sake, my child. I would not disgrace him, although he has wronged me more than I can tell."

"But you will assert your rights, mother—you

must assert your rights, and my rights," said Lizzy.

"Then you be Lady Walters!" said Mrs. Munday; "well, well, well, how things do turn and turn about, sure*ly*." And the old lady lifted both hands and let them fall emphatically on her lap, while her eyes stared through her spectacles at the real Lady Walters.

"Sir Robert Walters my father!" said Lizzy; "mother, you must be mistaken—how can it be?"

"I'm as sure as I am that you are my daughter," replied Mrs. Wilmington; "but his name wasn't Walters when I married him, it was Gordon."

"And he has assumed his name and title?"

"No, I have heard that when he returned to England an uncle on his mother's side had died; he was heir to the title, and was obliged to take the name and arms of the family with the estate of Burwell."

"But you have told me that he died in the Peninsular?"

"It was so reported—there's no doubt it was a ruse by which he hoped to stop further enquiries on my part respecting him."

"But did he leave you, mother?" enquired Lizzy.

"In India—he was a wild and profligate man, and—but don't ask me any more, child, please don't—let it rest for the present; you will hear it all soon enough."

"Mother!" exclaimed Lizzy, as she watched her countenance with an eye of keen solicitude, fearing lest some delusion was imposing upon her troubled mind, mother, "this tale is so strange, so bewildering—are you sure, sure you are not mistaken—are you sure, my dear mother?"

"Sure," said Mrs. Wilmington, "as that God is my Maker."

"But wouldn't he have known you?" asked Lizzy; "he has often seen you."

"I doubt whether his recollection would serve

him," replied her mother; "age and trouble have greatly altered me since that time—but I am astonished that he should not have known you, dear."

"Known me, mother! why I must have been an infant when—"

"You were not born when he left me," said Mrs. Wilmington; "but if I have any recollection of myself, your face must have brought back to his memory some vision of other days. Do you remember my asking you about your interview?—and what he said, and how he looked?"

"Yes, yes," said Lizzy; "and I do remember, too, how strangely he looked at me—there was in his eye something of perplexity—he seemed disturbed; and when he called me a fine lady, he was half beside himself—there was an uneasiness in his manner; and I recollect he started sometimes at my voice. Yes, yes, there was a great deal in him that showed disquietude."

"You did not tell me of it then," said Mrs. Wilmington.

"No; I thought it might have been nothing more than was natural, for I hadn't, of course, this key to his bosom—now I remember and now I can understand why he asked me who was my father? Oh!" she continued, "had I then known, Sir Robert would soon have had an answer to that question. Yes, he asked me who was my father?"

"What'll my lady say to it all when she do but hear it?" said Mrs. Munday, lifting up her hands and clasping them with a very emphatic clap.

"Now what do you mean to do, my dear mother; go at once to Burwell, I suppose, and assert your rights?"

"No, Lizzy; our better course will be to proceed to Heathmoor, as you wish to see Edgar—"

"And tell him all about it?"

"Not a word, my dear—not a word; we must find out my dear old friends Martha and Mary, and with their assistance I shall be able to establish my claim."

"Then how the haughty Lucy will—"

"Hush!" said Mrs. Wilmington; "there must be no triumph over her fall. At any rate, dear, *she* is innocent."

"I did not mean that—God forbid," said Lizzy; "but you know how contemptuously she and her mother treated you, how they tried to darken my reputation with infamous charges against my virtue; how Thornbury was sent to ruin me and to rob me of all that I had to be proud of, and—for I will say it, and will charge him with the crime—to murder me. I see it now, it is clear as the sun in the heavens. Yes, Sir Robert must have suspected who we were, and the reward he offered was only to entangle me in the snares of a villain like himself; that, too, is the secret of the charge against Edgar. Yes, *they* know us—*they* know us; we mustn't delay a moment."

Lizzy was excited beyond herself, and laid much emphasis on her words; she was not accustomed to indulge in outbreaks of passion or to give the rein to her high spirit; but now the

thought of all those hardships her mother had endured, the recital of all her wrongs, and the remembrance of all the insults and accusations they had suffered at the instance of Lady Walters and her daughter, roused her deepest feelings, and made her for a time different from what she had ever been. Gentle and amiable as her nature was, it was impossible to feel either gentle or amiable when she saw a long train of miseries which had resulted from the family that would have trampled them into the dust, and blotted out their very name from remembrance. A mother's wrongs seemed to curdle her blood, and she trembled with excitement as she remembered the treatment they had endured at the hands of him who had lured her mother from her home, and left her a friendless woman in a foreign land.

"Hush! my darling," said her mother, "we mustn't accuse him. Let us assert our rights, which, by God's help, I will do before long."

Thus saying she returned to the perusal of Martha's letter, dwelling upon every word, read-

ing and re-reading it as though scarcely sure it was a reality.

Lizzy threw herself into the old arm chair by the fire, and lost herself in the multitude of reflections which crowded upon her brain. Her features presented a strange contrast to their usual appearance, as her varied emotions were manifested; now a smile of joy blended into one of triumph, now a shadow passed over her fair brow as the thought of irreparable wrongs returned; then again her face kindled into an almost transplendent picture, as her mind reverted to the great centre of all her hopes, and the anticipated reward of her life's anxieties—her beloved Edgar!

CHAPTER VII.

HOW THE PARISH CONSTABLE DOES HIS DUTY.

It was the day after the events recorded in the last chapter that Edgar arrived at Heathmoor. As he entered the house of the hospitable landlord, Hopkins started as if a ghostly apparition had suddenly stood before him. Surprise, however, did not keep the good man long silent, for laying down his pipe he sang out lustily for "Nancy." And then grasping Edgar by the hand exclaimed—

"Lor, lor, lor, sir, how glad I be to see thee! Nancy, look here; here be Mr. ——". He

lowered his voice, and added in a whisper, "come in, sir—come in. Nancy, shut up door, and mind thee don't mention Mr. Hindly's name."

"You need not fear," said Edgar. "Mrs. Hopkins, I am glad to see you."

"So be I to see thee," answered the landlady, "and I be sorry for all this piece o' work, sir, I be. A strange business sure is it! and to blame a rale genleman wi' it. Lor, lor, thy poor mother would kick up coffin lid, sure enough, if she ceard half on it."

"Why what d'ye think?" said Hopkins, in a whisper, holding his mouth close to Edgar's ear, "what d'ye think?"

"I don't know," said Edgar.

"They be talking in room that thee be tooked up; they've got the deeds!"

"Deeds!" said Edgar; "what deeds?"

"That wur in thic cabrinet, what d'ye call't?" answered Hopkins.

"Where did they find them?" enquired Edgar; "not at my place."

"Lor, lor," said the landlord, "No; but they've got all yer 'andwritin' and everything.'"

"My handwriting!" exclaimed Edgar; "they're mad!"

"So they be," said Mrs. Hopkins, "and I'd make un know it too, sir, sure would ur. There, thy poor father be fit to break un's 'eart."

"Hold thic tongue, Nancy," said Hopkins; "let I speak. What'll thee have to drink, sir? Nancy get out thic bottle, and Mr. Hindly 'll have some o' thic suckin pig. Lor, lor, how sorry I be. Nancy, get out thic suckin' pig, I tell'ee and don't stand lookin' like a beer tub in petticoats; thee wast but a poor skinny thing when I married thee, and now see what thee beest. Bobbie! where be thic Bobbie? Now then, here, some sticks on fire, and mind, thee know this gentleman, don't'ee?"

"Ees, sir," said Bobbie, turning up his eyes which were half open, and grinning after his wonted fashion; grinning which made a horseshoe pattern wrinkle under each eye.

"Now mind, I'll cut thic tongue out if thee tell'st anybody this gentleman be here," said Hopkins.

Edgar thought the good landlord was taking a great deal of unnecessary precaution on his behalf; and, however kindly intended, he could not but look on it as more kind than flattering. But he suffered him to proceed after his own manner, determined to take the part of a spectator only. Hopkins's precautions, however, were taken with so much noise and clamour that, had any one been at the distance of a hundred yards from the inn, he must have been aware that something of an extraordinary nature was taking place. But Hopkins did everything with a loud voice, even his most secret whispers. His manner of hurrying from topic to topic, now letting loose his sarcasm against his wife, now returning to the more solemn business of his guest, was ludicrous. But he was in his evening humour, and therefore was not only unmanageable by everybody else but also by himself. Edgar, therefore, was obliged to let him proceed in his own way.

The "suckin' pig" was produced by the indefatigable Nancy, amid a volley of orders from her lord, who sang out lustily for knives and forks, plates and mustard, before his spouse had time to turn round.

"Lor, lor, Nancy," said he, "the gentleman be dyin' o' unger', I warrant thee; where be the pickles. That *be* a pig, sir, that be, of as fine a farerr as ever was in the world. She be a true Norfolk sow the mither of thic, and lor—why, Nancy, there be no mustard in thic pot. Lor, I be nearly crazy with thee, Nancy; thee seem to care for nothin' o' late but gossippin' over counter. Now, sir, try thic pig."

Edgar smiled, and could scarcely refrain from a hearty laugh at the wild and incoherent manner of his host.

"Now, Nancy, there be some cold pancakes, bean't there?"

"Lor, Chars, let the gentleman busy hisself wi' thic pig a bit, then I'll be ready wi' some hot pancakes."

"So do, Nancy," said her husband; "thee bean't so bad a 'ooman arter all, though thee wast but a skinny thing when I married thee. And now, sir, what be th' news? I hope this matter be all settled. Thy father, poor gentleman, I wur fit to cry like a babby when I seed he take on so."

"He has been here, then?" said Edgar.

"Here!" rejoined Hopkins; "he bided here a fortnit."

"He did!" exclaimed Edgar. "What did he say? Could he believe that I had any share in the robbery?"

"No, ur couldn't," said Hopkins, "and I told un thee quitted here thic same night; but it wur late, yer know, sir, werry late. I wish thee'd ha' tooked my advice, and bided here wi' us thic night. I could ha' cleared thee then; but when I told the squire as how thee went away by the coach, he wur fit to drown hisself in tears. Lor, lor, how he did cry and take on, and wring my hand, it seem to ache now wi' th' squeezin'."

"What fools these villains are!" exclaimed Edgar; "why didn't they ask the coachman about it?"

"Ay, thee be right," said Hopkins; "there wur no case till them deeds comed back in thee own 'andwritin'."

"What deeds do you mean, and what handwriting was it?" asked Edgar.

"It wur some deed of—lor, lor—what be the name of it? Nancy, what be the name o' thic deed they showed th' squire?"

"How should I know, Chars; I never seed it, and never eeard un called."

"Why thee knows everything sept what thee told parson when I married thee, and that wur to comfort I in sickness and ealth."

"Get along wi' thee, Charles! how foolish thee do talk, sure."

"Well, sir," continued Hopkins, "it wur a deed like a morgidge showin' you had borrered money on them papers tooked from thic Abbey."

"This is a mystery," said Edgar; "the devil

alone could have contrived such a plot against me!"

"How do thic suckin' pig eat?" enquired Hopkins, who, in the midst of the marvellous story he was reciting, could not altogether divert his mind from the subject on which he loved to dwell.

"It's very nice," said Edgar; "but where were these deeds found?"

"Lunnun."

"London!"

"Ha, at a Jew feller's—Lor', I *did* hear un's name, but I've forgot. Nancy, what be name o' thic feller?"

"You *did* tell I that, Chars, sure," said Mrs. Hopkins; "wur it Moses?"

"No; nor Nebchadnezzar," said Hopkins.

"It wur Solomon, Chars."

"So it wur, Nancy, Solomon."

Edgar dropped his knife and fork; the mystery became more entangled the more they attempted to unravel it.

"Come, take some more, sir; thee'st made but a poor dinner on't."

"How *could* it be!" exclaimed Edgar; "there is some deeper villany here than I thought for! Someone, then, has forged my handwriting. Did my father see it?"

"Sure did 'ur," said Mrs. Hopkins.

"Hold thic tongue, Nancy, and let I speak! thee will always say too much. The Squire, sir, seed the writin', and he said it wur yourn."

"*He* said it was mine!" exclaimed Edgar; "how could he say so? He is false and malicious!"

"Nay, sir, he didn't say it like wi' any ill-feelin'; he said it to me. There wur nobody here but him and me, and Nancy. And how he did cry, sure enough. Lor', sir, it be a pity thee can't make't up wi' un some'ow."

"No," said Edgar, "it is no pity: there is no room for pity here. My father seems intent upon my ruin, and he has almost effected it. He has robbed me of my property, and now he has taken my character."

"No," replied Hopkins, "he be a feelin' man, and I know would save yer wi' his life; but he said there wur no chance."

"No chance!" said Edgar; "I hope there's a certainty of my repaying these villains! I will see the magistrates to-morrow."

"Look'ee, sir," said Hopkins, "thee'd better get away till it's over a-bit."

"I'll not skulk from justice," replied Edgar, "it's what I seek. Let them produce their evidence, and I'll refute it."

At this moment Bobbie entered the room, and leering first at Edgar, and then at his master, pointed to the window.

"Speak!" vociferated Hopkins. "Now then, what is't? Speak't out straight."

"There be Thornbury at winder," whispered Bob.

"What?" shouted Hopkins, not catching the words.

"Thornbury at winder," repeated the boy.

Hopkins held up his hands, and a slight change was visible in his countenance.

"It's the villain," said Edgar, "I want to meet—the would-be murderer of Lizzie."

As he spoke his face turned pale, his eyes kindled into a flame, and his whole demeanour indicated the most violent agitation. It seemed as if the long slumbering fire of his unconquerable spirit were suddenly roused into a fury that nothing could subdue; he dashed aside the chair on which he had been sitting, and was about to rush from the room to confront his enemy, when Hopkins, aware of his intention, suddenly forced himself between him and the door, and, being a powerful and heavy man was not to be easily displaced.

"Let me go—let me go!" exclaimed Edgar.

"No," said Hopkins; "in Heaven's name, sir, hold! There sharn't be no harm come to thee through bein' under my roof. I'll have no works like thic, nor shall a genleman be disgraced if I can help un. By the powers, sir, I'll keep thee here if it only be for thy mother's sake."

"And so do too, Chars," added Mrs. Hopkins.

Edgar threw himself into a seat, and the heavy palpitations of his heart were distinctly audible; rage seemed to have entirely conquered him, and as he passed his hand over his eyes to dash from them the tears that his very passion had forced from him, he uttered a bitter and a dreadful curse.

"My good sir," said Hopkins, who was affected with the painful position of his guest, "it'll all come right, I know; they be willains, and 'll have their day; but hark'ee, sir, thee be a genleman, and I'd 'a stake my life upon yer."

"Ay, Chars, and so'd I stake mine too," said Nancy.

"There, thee be nothin'," said Hopkins. "Look'ee, sir, thic Thornbury be a rogue, and here be Bobbie that seed him wi' the young 'oman. Mark thee it'll all come out, won't it, Bobbie."

"Ees, sir," said the youth, brushing his coat cuff over the mass of hair which hung straight down over his forehead.

"What is it, boy?" asked Edgar.

Bobbie looked at his master with almost as much sagacity as a sheep dog does to the shepherd, to obtain leave to proceed.

"Tell it out, Bobbie; spake't out straight," said Hopkins.

"Thornbury arxed I if I'd sin the—the young ooman," said Bobbie.

"When?" said Edgar.

"Arter I seed him wi' his arm round her."

"Well, go on," urged Hopkins; "out wi' it."

"And I said as how I had, and he said as how he'd give I a sovereign to say as how it wur not he, but this 'ere genleman, and then I know'd as he'd bin tryin' to do summat, cos—"

Bob paused.

"Cos what? Come, go on; out wi' it, I tell'ee, said Charles."

"Cos I seed the tall gipsy as was thereabouts next day, and he arxed I if I'd sin anythin' th' overnight, and I said as how I'd sin Thornbury try to shove the gal in the water."

"Why didn't you tell me this before?" said

Edgar. "Do you remember telling me that this villain was walking with the young woman?"

"Ees, sir," said Bobbie, whose artfulness was apparent.

"Why didn't you tell me the truth?"

"I wur afeard, sir," said the boy; "and Thornbury said as how he'd hang me up on a tree if I told lies about un."

"Lies!" said Edgar; "but we didn't want lies, boy."

"No, sir; but Thornbury said how it wur lies, and how I wur to say I hadn't seen he at all, for he said how it warn't he; but—"

"But what?" interrupted Hopkins.

"That made me sure it wur he," continued Bob, "for I warn't sure like till he said it warn't he, tho' I thought it wur; and the next day I sees the gipsy, and he told I as how Thornbury wur goin' to kill her, and then I minded how he tried to shove her in thic pond."

"And that be true," said Hopkins, "thee may be sure."

"Did you ever tell him what the gipsy had told you?" asked Edgar.

Bob hesitated.

"Spake't out," said Hopkins; "out wi' it, I tell thee."

"No, sir," answered Bob.

"Why not?"

"Cos I were afeared he'd hang I up."

"P'st about hang thee up," said Hopkins; "thee be a purty fellar, bean't thee, to keep all this 'ere in thee like thic?"

"Ees, sir."

"What didst do wi' sovereign? spent it, I warrant thee."

Bob was silent, and, finding no more questions immediately addressed to him, slunk out of the room, glad enough of escaping from an examination, the result of which he was not quite sure would not hang him.

"Thee sees, sir," said Hopkins, "there be foul play, as I told thee. Now do thee keep clear o' these rogues till—"

"No," said Edgar; "I will drag the whole plot to light. They cannot have a tittle of evidence to substantiate their charge."

At this moment a loud knock at the bar door aroused the worthy landlord as he was in the act of relighting his pipe, which he usually accomplished by means of a pair of tongs and a live ember.

"Why what be thic hurry, now then?"

"It be Constable Quarterman, sure 'nough Chars, and here he be comin' right in."

"Now then," said the landlord, as he rose to meet the valiant officer, "what be thy business now, Master Quarterman?"

"In the Queen's name," said Quarterman, fumbling in his pocket for the warrant.

"And what about the Queen's name?" demanded Hopkins; "come, out wi' it. Dost want I, Master Quarterman; spake't out straight."

"I believe that there gentleman's Mr. Hindly," said the constable, "isn't it, Mr. Hopkins?"

"And what then, neighbour? It's a genleman I warrant thee, and one that the like o' thee don't often fall in company wi', so now sit down and have a pipe wi' un."

Then, turning to Edgar, who scarcely looked towards the new guest, he added—

"This be our neighbour Quarterman wot makes all the breeches in thic parish, and be the biggest man at sessions. Now then, master constable, I tell thee, down wi' thee, and light pipe."

"I must do my duty, although it's very painful," said Quarterman. "Mr. Hindly," he said, in a very civil soft voice, and then paused.

"At your service," said Edgar; "and now let me hear your business—don't fear, my good man, I am Edgar Hindly, of Heathmoor."

"I 'ave a warrant to ap-pre-hend you," said the constable, "on a charge of haiding hand habetting in a burgalary, which took place at Heathmoor on the night of—"

"That will do," said Edgar; "where's the warrant?"

"I'll tell thee wot, neighbour Quarterman, wi' all respect for thic greatness o' thine, thee don't take this genleman in my house," said the landlord; "I'll go to —— if thee shall."

"No, sure enough," said Mrs. Hopkins, "that ur sha'n't, while I be live; I'll wring thic neck fust."

"Mind," said Quarterman, "'ow you hinterrupt a pleace horsifer in the hexecution of his jewty, sir—his *jewty*, mind."

"Thee be a purty fellar for peace orfiser; why didn't thee take up gipsies, I tell thee."

"That is not the business," said the constable, "not the business on hand at present."

"I shall remain here to-night," said Edgar; "to-morrow I will be ready to attend you."

"You must come," said Quarterman; "there really ain't no hopshun. You'll pardon me, I'm sure."

"And where's your power to enforce your *must*, my good friend?" asked Edgar, somewhat playfully, seeing that the tailor's courage, like

his person, was not very great, and observing manifest symptoms that the little he possessed was vanishing.

Quarterman, who like his needle, had an eye to business, and thinking that he might live long enough to regret any violent measures towards the future owner of Heathmoor, seemed more disposed to make him his friend, for the sake of future custom, than his enemy.

"I beg your parding, sir," he said; "but of course you're a gentleman, sir, and—"

"Gentle or simple," said Edgar, "do your duty, although, if it lies in dragging me from this house, I cannot for the life of me understand why, if the Queen sent you on such business, she did not lend you a pair of stouter legs, and a more muscular frame; but sit down, good Quarterman. I have no wish to harm a Queen's—what do you call yourself, ambassador?"

"Constable, sir—constable," said Quarterman very softly.

"Constable are you, and how long have you been in Her Majesty's service?"

"About six years, sir; let me see, Jane will be seven come July—yes, six years, sir."

"And did you ever take anybody up?" asked Edgar.

Hopkins burst into a loud laugh, which somewhat discomposed the officer.

"Now look," said Edgar, "I suppose you are not above business, and as I intend to reside here—"

"Yes, sir—yes, sir," said Quarterman; "your father told me, sir—but—but—"

And with the most obsequious deference to his prisoner, he took his seat by the fire, and availed himself of a very long churchwarden pipe, which was placed for his service by Mrs. Hopkins.

"Now, thic see," said the landlord, "thic be better than thic blusterin' an' takin' the gen'leman up."

"Why, you see, sir," said the constable, hem-

ming a good deal between each word, "I know the gentleman's as far from 'aving any 'and in the thing as—as I am—"

"And a good deal further," said Hopkins.

"But you see, Thornbury told me you was here, sir; it mustn't be known that I—I didn't take you, sir; I hought to take you, sir, hof course; but knowin' your family, you see, sir—"

"It ud make thy fortun' if thic did," said Hopkins; "why, look'ee master tailor, here be a sum for thee, a tailor be only a ninth part of a man at the full, and thee be only a quarter of a ninth, how much be thic?"

And Hopkins laughed so loudly and so long, that the constable was prevented from returning the attack. He shifted himself uneasily in his seat, and attempted to reply, but as often as he did so, a fresh and louder peal of laughter drowned the good man's soft words.

"Well, ne'er mind, neighbour Quarterman," continued the landlord; "we've had many a joke, ain't us, boy? There, I call thee boy, for thee

be but a boy to I. How many beest got in family now, Tom? Wur thic last a gal or a boy? Thee doesn't drink; d— it, drink boy."

Thus Hopkins, by way of what was commonly termed in the public room "chaff," endeavoured to get his man "up," which means inciting the good Quarterman to drink so heartily, that the proceedings of the evening might afford a store of amusement for the guests of the "Talbot" for many a day to come.

The story of the capture of the Heathmoor burglar would be a legend for the winter fire, at the expense of the officer, for Hopkins looked upon the whole as a ludicrous joke rather than a matter of serious importance. To him it was so preposterous that a gentleman should be charged with a burglary in his own house, that his honest rustic intellect was rather amused than alarmed.

As for Edgar, it seemed as if the frolics of his early days were returned to him in a new shape; his consciousness of innocence rendered him even

jovial as he entered into the humour of the landlord, and watched the slow gradations of drunkenness which the constable manifested. A slight stammering, and a gradual thickening of the voice were unmistakeable signs of the approaching "drunk," and when he declared that "the—the—the—th—th— gen'l'man was th—th—ni-cest company edvrbe—en in inslife—inslife," Hopkins winked at his wife with one eye, and at Edgar with the other. Then Quarterman's pipe became affected with an asthmatical wheezing in the tube; the tobacco showed a wonderful indifference to fire, the bowl displayed an obstinacy that brooked no control whenever it was thrust near the flame, till last of all the valiant officer, unconscious of the importance of the document which empowered him to arrest his prisoner, tried to light his pipe with it.

The scene of boisterous mirth which followed may be imagined; even Edgar forgot the circumstance of his unhappy position, and gave way to the general outburst of unextinguishable laughter

Quarterman hiccupped and laughed idiotically, utterly unconscious of the cause of so much merriment, and declaring, as well as he could, that Mr. Hindly was the bestfler devrmet, and swore he never laughed so much in all his life. Hopkins next called for a song, for Quarterman was always proud of his soft voice at the weekly free-and-easy, and generally contributed therewith, to the amusement of his many admirers. He had two songs, "Home Sweet Home," and "The Banksothebloomerselle." But, unfortunately, as he began the former melody, his wife burst into the room, declaring she would "Home sweet Home" him, and seizing him by the hair, shook his head in such a manner as must have considerably endangered the melodious tubes of the tailor's throat; but Quarterman seemed utterly indifferent to his spouse's treatment, and allowed his head to oscillate agreeably to the good woman's influence, simply asking her not to keep on longer than she liked.

Meanwhile, the malignant spirit of Thornbury

was exulting over the prospect of capturing his enemy. The reader will remember that the gipsy had seen him in the neighbourhood of the cottage where Lizzy and her mother were staying. Thornbury had become aware that he was detected, and consequently had returned to Heathmoor. When he saw Edgar pass through the village, his heart bounded with fiendish delight, for his life's object seemed to be the ruin of one he had made his enemy. But he felt that Heathmoor was not the proper place for his capture. Repairing, therefore, stealthily to the inn, by the bye path already indicated, he took up his position under the window, in order, if possible, to ascertain the object of Edgar's visit. He was aware that the constable would be loth to try his hand in the business of arresting one of twice his size, and yet he deemed it prudent to communicate to him the fact of his arrival, at the same time begging him to desist from any attempt to take him under present circumstances.

For some time the valiant constable protested

a great deal about his duty, and obliquely hinted at the reward which had been offered for his apprehension.

"Which," said Thornbury, "'ll belong to me. *I* found him."

"But I am the constable," rejoined Quarterman; "I have horthorety to happreend; you have none."

At length, after much altercation, a compromise between the claims of these worthies was effected, although the tailor, with the keenness of his needle, in his secret mind, resolved upon "threadling" (as he termed it) his prey, and with that intent set out for the "Talbot;" the result of which visit is known.

Thornbury, meanwhile, intent upon outflanking the tailor, resolved also upon a neat contrivance to inveigle him into his net. If he could apprehend him in the neighbourhood of Burwell, his victory would be more complete, because in that case he would be taken before Sir Robert Walters. His scheme, therefore, was this: to write a letter

to Edgar, purporting to come from an unknown friend, urging upon him the necessity of leaving Heathmoor, and informing him that Lizzy would be at Burwell at a certain time on the following day.

The scheme was by no means well designed, and was ill-calculated to delude so keen a man as Edgar. The probability is that he would have looked upon the letter with contempt but for the peculiar circumstances in which he stood with regard to the gipsy—Thornbury acted upon the supposition that Edgar was altogether unacquainted with the place of Lizzy's abode, and he had gathered sufficient information on the subject from words he had overheard at the inn. The letter, therefore, was written, but the next difficulty to be got over was the delivery, which was accomplished in the following manner: muffling himself in a great coat and travelling cap, Thornbury proceeded to a posting-house some six miles distant from Heathmoor, where he was not altogether unknown, and hired a horse, which

strangely enough, was a grey. His plan succeeded—he rode up to the inn in great haste, and handing the letter to the landlord, who came himself to the door, departed with such hurry as left Hopkins no time to make enquiries. This event happened shortly after the convivial tailor had left the inn to realise in the arms of his spouse the ecstacy of that bliss which he had attempted to describe in his vocal entertainment.

The landlord returned to his guest with the letter, scrutinizing the envelope with an eye that seemed to read its contents.

"What be this?" said he, as he entered the room, "it be for thee, sir; but it's mighty zig-zag writin'; why the H be like a gridiron."

"Who brought it?" asked Edgar.

"*Who?*" repeated the landlord, "he might be the devil for what I seed, for I never seed un's face nor eerd un's voice; he putty nigh rode over I, and just as I wur about askin' what it wur, he wur gone like a grasshopper; lor, lor how un did ride sure*ly!* It were thic devil I do bleeve, Nancy."

"But what did ur say, Chars?" asked Mrs. Hopkins.

"Say! why said nothing don't I tell thee; be d—— if that beant a purty business too; but lor, why it seem I hadn't time to look at un."

"You say it was a white horse," said Edgar, after perusing the letter.

"White as 'Snowdrop,' Nancy," exclaimed Hopkins, holding up his hands and referring to one of his cows.

Edgar turned over the letter, looked at it closely, placed it in his pocket, and seemed for a few minutes to be lost in thought. Meanwhile Hopkins continued to narrate the fact to his wife, repeating and reiterating it as though it were an enigma that could never by the remotest possibility be solved.

Edgar naturally came to the conclusion, rather from the mysterious manner of its being conveyed to him than anything else, except the circumstance of the color of the horse, that it was from the gipsy. That it could have proceeded from

any one else there seemed no reason to suspect, and least of all could he have imagined that it was from Thornbury. He felt, however, the necessity of taking his friends into his confidence, and with that view showed them the brief and hastily scrawled letter.

"Well, look'ee," said Hopkins, "*I* be glad; now go back, sir, to thic Squire, and make't up wi' un; don't 'ee break the poor old genleman's heart. I'll be hanged if I don't go wi' thee if the'll go, and make't up for thee; there, he talked to I like a brother, and feels for thee; *he* won't stand in the way o' thic marrying up to thic maid, and I told un it wur foolish to try to keep thee apart; lor, it be natur, sir; it be natur all over, beant it Nancy? and she be a lady in heart, and a purty face she got too; why, look here, sir, there be my wife, Gord knows why I married she, but I did, and here we be; she wur but a poor skinny thing when—"

"Get along, Chars, wi' thic nonsense," said Mrs. Hopkins.

"And now see what thee beest," added her husband. "Look'ee," he continued, "there be as good a horse in my stable as ever a man rid, it'll be saddled in no time, and I'll tell thee sir, to hie on to Burwell, see the old genleman, make it up wi' un, and Gord bless thee. I'm but a poor country clown farmer, but I knows what be right and what be wrong."

"You are very good," said Edgar.

"*Good!*" exclaimed Hopkins, "there, I be a open hearted feller, and I knows thee ha' been set on, but I'll be hanged if I don't have thic Thornbury in jail, as sure as I be a man; and thic Bobbie shall transport he; tell *I* 'bout a sovereyn." And the old man gave a short laugh, such as he was in the habit of finishing his sentences with when the subject was one which moved his contempt or derision.

"Yes," said Edgar; "I'll go to Burwell."

"And that's a good boy," said Hopkins, who could now scarcely stop speaking; although there was so much genuine earnestness in his rosy face

that no one could have doubted his good nature. He grasped Edgar's hand, and for a long time continued to address him on a multiplicity of subjects, although generally bending and blending them by an inexplicable and extraordinary manœuvre of rustic phraseology to the purpose. "And now then," he added; "Nancy, we'll have a bottle o' thic burgundy."

Edgar declined the proffered kindness, but his refusal only irritated the jovial landlord, who swore it was paid for, and defied the world, flesh, and devil, with the tailor into the bargain, to turn him from his purpose of drinking it.

Edgar, although too sad thoroughly to enjoy the frank and honest spirit of his host, could not but regard him, in spite of his external roughness, as one who possessed a spirit of kindness not too frequently found in excessively refined society, whose courtesies are too often the veriest *shams*.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHADOWS OF PAST EVENTS.

Job's heart was not naturally the heart of a villain. He was a man of some talent, ambition, and courage. The perversion of his nature was due in some measure to the peculiar circumstances of his position, but his whole character was a paradox. Born to great wealth, he was, nevertheless, constantly struggling with poverty; aspiring for the world's applause, he was yet contemning mankind; regarding fame as unworthy of achievement, he was building his future upon it. He deemed the

world a deception and outdid it in deceit. On the platform he was constantly uttering sentiments which he never felt; promising what he never intended to perform, and preaching what he could not practice, and all this because others did the same. He courted popular opinion while he derided it, and foisted upon the world a fictitious character because he looked upon the world as a delusion. But it was strange, with all his spurious philosophy, that he never for a single moment attempted to form an estimate of his character or actions; with a fatal belief that he could ultimately rectify all things, he rushed madly down the shelving shore of crime, until he found himself beyond his depth. But even then his extraordinary courage and presence of mind did not forsake him. He was never a drowning man even in the deepest flood, but battled bravely on, and was neither overwhelmed nor afraid. His projects were planned with mathematical accuracy; and, where a thousand other men would have been ruined, he triumphed in

success. He placed the detection of his forgeries beyond possibility; difficulties vanished when he looked at them, and schemes thickened in his mind for the achievement of his bold adventures so fast, that his only trouble was to select among so many. There is no doubt that, had his nature been less sanguine, there would have been times when even in the full career of his so-called success, he would have reflected upon conduct which his better feelings would have prompted him to despise; but his great fault at life's outset had been that he had taken a false view of mankind. He felt, perhaps, too keenly that his origin was humble—nay, as he deemed it, contemptible; he was moving in a society to which wealth alone gave him a claim, and among people who valued him only on account of it. He spent recklessly, because spending was his passport to distinction; and was content to purchase, at the highest price, that respect which he affected to despise. He never dreamed that mankind have any reverence for

honour, honesty, patriotism, or talent; his crude notions of men had been gathered from a father ill-calculated to impress his mind with those generous and lofty principles without which a man never wins the abiding respect of his fellows. To overreach all with whom he came in contact had been instilled into him from his childhood; to impose upon the world in general with a display of philosophy which he secretly ignored, of patriotism he never felt, and of honesty which he had no claim to, had been his aim. By these means, and with these views, he entered Parliament, and was celebrated as a wealthy man who dressed exquisitely. But here at once was manifested the egregious mistake of his life; he had contrived to impose upon the vulgar by a fictitious appearance of excessive gentility, but he ought to have known that the House of Commons was composed of very different elements. The vulgar notion that it consists chiefly of men whose "yeas" and "nays" are extorted from them by the influence of party, or the traitorous policy of

self-interest, was soon dissipated when he found himself surrounded by English gentlemen. There was a picture of mankind which Job might have studied with incalculable advantage; he might have learned there that life is not altogether a sham, nor honour a mere mockery, that there exists something in human nature above the spirit of paltry speculation and ingenious craft which had carried his father to affluence, and himself to his present position. But Job's lessons of life had all been learned in a different school, and, imbibed as they had been in his earliest childhood, it was difficult, indeed, to withstand their influence. That he possessed an intellect capable of achieving much, although not equal to the highest attainments, there was no doubt; but intellect itself is the more dangerous as it is the more powerful, if it be not controlled by honest principle and a proper appreciation of the rights and duties of mankind.

Job was sitting in his chamber when his invaluable servant brought him a letter. It was in

the handwriting of a female, and bore the post-mark of the village where his father resided.

"What's up?" said he, as he turned it over and broke the seal. His next word was—"Dead! The old man gone at last! Dear me!" And he read on to the end, re-read, folded the letter, and put it in his pocket. He knew now what must be done. It was late at night—ten o'clock—but he must go; no one must overhaul "the effects" but himself.

"I wonder," he thought, "if mother knows it." He threw himself in his chair, and tried to feel sad; for he knew it was right to be so. And yet he had never loved the old man in his life; he was too stingy to love. "Poor old fellow! he was sorry he was gone, too." Then he rang for Friday, and told him to call a cab.

"I shall not be back to-night," said he. "If anybody calls, I am gone into the country."

Friday touched his hair, and Job drove off.

When he reached the house of his dead father, a momentary sensation of awe seemed to depress

him, as though he felt a presentiment that all was not in exact accordance with his wishes.

"Why didn't you send for me sooner, Miller?" he asked, addressing the housekeeper.

"I sent for you, sir, as soon as there was danger," said the woman.

"Danger! your note said he was dead."

"The poor gentleman died as I was gitting the pen and ink, sir."

"Is any one here besides yourself?"

"Nobody, sir."

"Nor has been—no one but you when he died?"

"Only nuss, sir, which she's jest gone out for a little while, sir."

"Where are the keys? is everything locked up?"

"Everything, sir. Mr. Hawkins, you know, was werry careful—he was werry careful, poor man—and he asked me, poor gentleman, to lock up every mortal thing, and take the keys to him, which he held in his hand when he died. But he

died werry 'appy and comfortable, sir; you couldn't see when he were gone, you could'nt—he went off so peaceful. He told me to bless you all for him, more spesherly you, sir. You 'peared to be his favourite: poor gentleman! he were werry anxshus about you, he were, and told me he hoped you'd forgive him for your poor dear mother's sake, he did."

"What?" asked Job, unable to comprehend the woman's meaning.

"He hoped as you'd forgive him, sir, he did."

"Forgive him!" repeated Job, "what did he mean?"

"He said you'd know all, sir, you would."

"But didn't he tell you?" enquired Job.

"He did tell me something, but it ain't for me to say agin—poor gentleman! it ain't?—he were much hurt when he thought all about it. Here's the keys, sir."

"What is it, Miller, that he told you?"

"He said as you'd see it in his will, he did."

"Will!" exclaimed Job; "did he make a will?"

"Lor bless you, sir! some time ago, and a crockidile, only a day or two ago—it's all regler, sir, it is."

Job lost no further time in conversation, but after fortifying his nerves with a glass of brandy proceeded to the chamber in which were the remains of his father. He walked slowly, and with a melancholy air of meditation; softly, as though fearful lest his footsteps should awake the dead.

"I don't want you, Miller," said he, as he saw the housekeeper was following him; and he waved his hand to her to retire. He then pursued his way up the stairs and along the passages of the elegant villa which his father had built for his retirement, but which his parsimonious habits had prevented him from furnishing in accordance with its requirements.

To say that Job's nature was too obtuse to feel the awfulness of his position, or the dread solem-

nity of the death chamber, were to detract from the courage and undaunted nerve which carried him unflinchingly through every scene, and amounted almost to hardihood and rashness. As he approached the still chamber, bearing in his hand the glimmering candle which cast only a dismal twilight on the scene, his heart yielded to the impulse of nature. There was nothing of trembling in his step, but there was a thrill of horror pervading his soul which to him was unaccountable ; his face was paler than usual, and a slight perspiration moistened his forehead. There was a weight upon his heart, and for a moment he paused before he pushed open the door, which was slightly ajar, and through which was visible the pale glimmer of the solitary rushlight that flickered at the top of the sombre chamber. His mind was agitated, and his heart seemed to sink as he repeated the words of Miller—"A will !"

He pushed open the door gently, and looked into the room ; his foot was on the threshold, and his eye glanced at the dread scene—the

white sheet, through which the outline of his father's corpse was discernible, caused him a momentary shudder : but now was the time when his bold spirit was to wrestle with his human nature, and either sink under the dread of infamy or triumph over his better feelings. He must now with one great effort blot out from the eye of the world whatever traces yet remained of his past career, and at the same time erect a barrier against the possibility of the ruin which seemed to be involved in the announcement of Miller.

For some moments he looked upon the sheet without removing it, as if to accustom himself to the sight; then glancing cautiously round the chamber, he closed the door, locked it, and was alone with his conscience and the dead.

Now, Job, if reason, feeling, and affection are not utterly dead within thee, thy position is one which must awaken remorse, or at least reflection. There is now a link visible between you and the eternal world, there may be an invisible spirit of

that other world hovering between you and yonder corpse.

But Job's business was not to meditate on death, or eternity, or to hold communion with the spirits of the dead; these he could neither see nor hear. Whether they existed or not was to him a matter of indifference. He only cared for living man. What to him were those flickerings of conscience? He spurned the appeals of death itself, and mocked the whisperings of the still small voice that lingered yet unpleasantly in his ear.

"I will look at him, at all events," said he; and he drew down the sheet steadily, softly from the cold, thin, pale face of his father—bearing in death its characteristic expression, a frown upon the wrinkled brow, and a faint smile upon the thin lips. But Job's own countenance was a better picture to study. With all his hardihood he could not gaze into that face without giving way to the feeling which softens the boldest heart,

and defies it to spurn the melting instinct of human nature. A tear burst from his eye, and then another, and another, till the manly face of Job was drenched with sorrows of which he would have been ashamed anywhere but in the presence of the dead.

He threw back the sheet, and turned himself from the corpse. Having thus paid what he deemed a sufficient tribute of affection to his father's memory, he proceeded to business more calm, more deliberate than when he entered the chamber. "Now, Conscience, you must just step on one side until I send for you, which I will be sure to do when I want you; Affection, you mustn't interfere in matters of business, for business and affection generally disagree; Death, you must keep back; your horrible visage must not prevent me from doing what I must—I'll just put up a temporary screen between you and me, my great coat will keep you off for the present—you know nothing of wills and legal business; Sorrow, away with your tears, till we get to the

grave, and then you may perform your public duty—at present my work is private; Memory—yes, accursed Memory—*you* must be here, because you are the ledger in which are all my accounts with the world—can't dispense with you, only I wish you had a merrier face. And now let us see how we stand."

Job opened the bureau and looked into the drawers which it contained; then a secret drawer, the spring of which he had some difficulty in finding. Papers and documents were hastily glanced over and laid aside, for the will was the chief, nay the only, instrument which he now sought. It was in the secret drawer, carefully, professionally tied, sealed, and endorsed. Job's heart sank; he was then not the heir of all; his calculations had failed. Ruin was before him. It was hardly likely his father had left all to him, to the exclusion of his mother and younger brothers.

He tore open the seal and ripped open the packet with his penknife; in an instant the crackling parchment unfolded its contents to his

anxious eye. He pursued steadily and cautiously the technical phraseology of the well-drawn instrument; now his eyes are lit up with momentary hope, now they flash fire of indignation, and as they seem fixed in a gaze of terror he utters an exclamation of anger and despair, for they are almost blinded with the words, "my natural son, commonly called Job."

Then poured upon him the recollection of other days, and the key of all the many secrets that had bewildered and mystified his life was discovered. The thought was too painful to bear; the irreparable injury of his illegitimacy rankled in his bosom like a viper's venom. He dashed down the instrument and uttered an oath such as had never before profaned his lips. A curse upon the dead that lay before him, a bitter execration of his existence, and he felt for the first time in his life humbled.

All the better feelings which had hitherto suggested a scruple as to his future conduct were changed; now he could think without compunc-

tion and act without hesitation. Conscience and affection were alike obliterated, and a spirit of revenge was an auxiliary to resolution.

After some moments spent in these bitter reflections Job continued his perusal of the will, and at its conclusion his summing up amounted to this: that with regard to the estate called "Hawkins Park," which was left to his second brother, he had anticipated his father's disposition by disposing of it himself—*that* was gone; The Burleigh estate, left to his other brother, was also sold; a large estate, to which his mother was entitled, was gone by the same process. Some other estates of considerable value were heavily mortgaged, one of which was devised to himself.

It was quite clear, however, that this will wouldn't do; his father (bah! he would not call him father) was an old fool to leave his property like that; it was not only absurd, but positively impracticable; it couldn't be carried into effect. Why the property was half of it gone, and a considerable portion of it in mortgage. There

was the ready money, it was true, to be equally divided—share and share alike; but there wasn't half so much—no, nor a quarter—of that as the old man had supposed. The will described it as fifty thousand pounds in the Three per Cents., while thirty thousand had gone to liquidate Job's parliamentary expenses and other debts. How could the old man have been so foolish as to imagine that Job could do all that with two pounds a week? And the Consols, too, as if Job would let it lie and rust in the Three per Cents. No, he had put it to better use than that, and as he had paid up the dividends regularly—

He stopped, such reasoning was ridiculous even for him. But at all events it was quite clear that the old man had bequeathed and devised very much more property than he owned, therefore that will was no use. 'The old fool wouldn't let me make his will for him—no; but he can't hinder me from making it *now*.' And a smile, yes a smile, lit up Job's countenance as the thought occurred to him. It was nothing to him

even if the old man's spirit was looking at him; he didn't care what spirit looked at him so long as the old man didn't jump up and look at him himself. Job turned his head towards the bed, but there was no motion, no breath, no rustling of sheet; he just glanced at the feet and legs of the corpse as they lay stiff and straight as marble beneath their coverlet. He altered the screen so that these too might be hidden, for nerves somehow will twitch, be we ever so bold, and the mind sometimes will think against our will of disagreeable subjects. He thought of another room, for the companionship of the dead was not quite what he liked. But no; what he had to do must be done there. What was to be done?

Job rested his head between his hands for some minutes. But in those few minutes the following thoughts, maturing themselves into plans, passed through his clear but agitated mind. To destroy the original will would be useless, for in all probability there would be a draught of it. But yet that will must not operate, it must not be de-

stroyed in substance but in effect; it must be revoked. There was a codicil, too, of very recent date, so recent indeed that the ink was scarcely dry; this codicil confirmed the testament to which it was appended. Now was the difficulty. There must be a will prepared at once; the signature of his father could be imitated, but there must be two more signatures. Whose could they be? Whose could he forge? Then again he dared not frame a testament leaving the property to himself; that would awaken suspicion, especially so soon after the execution of the codicil. But he must have the entire control over the estates and the funds. That was indispensable. He must draw the instrument then in favour of his mother—for over her he possessed unbounded influence—appointing her executrix and himself executor. This would effect his purpose; his mother would of course decline to act, and leave him sole manager of the whole. It was a happy thought.

Taking, therefore, a will form from his pocket, for he had provided himself with one or two of

these in case of emergency, he commenced filling it up.

"To my dear wife, Elizabeth Hawkins, was left" all and everything in the shape of personalty that could be enumerated, as also his freehold, copyhold, and leasehold estates whatsoever and wheresoever, whether in possession, reversion, or remainder. And his dear wife and dear natural son, called Job Hawkins, were duly appointed executrix and executor.

This was a master piece of legal cunning; but now for the signatures. The supposed testator's was soon written, and so excellent was the imitation that those who had been long accustomed to the handwriting of Hawkins could not have denied its validity. No one could have undertaken to swear that it was not the genuine signature of the old man. Job himself would be a good witness to the will, as nothing was left to him by it; his own name was therefore subscribed. But he wanted another. Turning over the account books and miscellaneous papers of the

bureau, he discovered no name there that would do. But his ingenious mind suggested to him a scheme. There was an old man, a very old man, living at some little distance from the village, who had once acted in a menial capacity for his father. His signature would do; a suit of clothes for mourning for the old gentleman, his late employer, would extract from him a receipt—the very thing.

And so it was all settled, and at a late hour, or rather at an early hour of the morning Job quitted the chamber of death, carefully concealing such papers and documents as he thought necessary for his multifarious purposes, but especially the veritable testament, which he had now superseded by the forged instrument.

The housekeeper was yet up, and Job found the table provided with refreshments. His countenance was melancholy, as was that of the worthy Miller, and an air of deep thought spread a sombre hue over it as he solaced his dejected spirits with the good cheer which she had pro-

vided. It was yet early morning, and Job had no desire to be abroad till the sun had risen; he soothed himself therefore with a cigar, while he conversed familiarly with Miller, gathering from her all that was essential to the furtherance of his projects.

As he sat and thought of the future, grave apprehensions sometimes arose within him. The Proctors would certainly be surprised at so sudden an alteration in the disposition of the property—only two days previously to the date of the fictitious instrument the genuine codicil had been executed; but the Proctors could not dispute its validity. They would be bound to obtain probate of the new document, that was certain, and their surprise would be nothing to him; his father had a right to make any alteration he pleased. But there was another little difficulty that for a moment threw its shadow on his path. The will must be proved; his mother no doubt would be persuaded to decline to act, and to leave the executorship with him. He then must prove

alone, must swear—swear before God and man—that the spurious and damnable concoction of his evil brain was the genuine will and testament of his father.

It would be perjury of the blackest hue, but he must not stop for perjury now; conscientious scruples must be scattered to the winds; it must be perjury or ruin. Dire necessity was his excuse, and his lips, if he were dumb for ever after, must kiss the sacred volume which contained the utterances of eternal truth. While he looked heaven in the face he must swear, calling down the Eternal God for his witness, to the most diabolical lie that the tongue could pronounce! But whatever the consequences, it must be done; the dead tell no tales, their secrets are buried with them, and there was no living being, save the old man whose signature he intended to affix to the supposed testament, who could deny its validity, and he was too ignorant to do so.

But who would enquire about it? Who would

dare to cast an imputation upon his high and estimable character? The world was his witness, and the world was the admirer of all his manifold and excellent qualities. His name was in half the subscription lists and Institution rolls of London; he was known as a pious and beneficent patron of all that was worthy of encouragement; he could bring down the very pet curates (including the Revd. Silver Spooney; and, as he used to call him, "The Tother") from the pulpits to the platform, to pronounce his praises, and he had often done so; he was already a Saint, and any impeachment of his honour would make him a Martyr. Since the Revd. Silver Spooney had dined with him, he had been loud in his commendations, and Silver Spooney would stake his sacred reputation, together with that prospective vision of an Archbishopric, which he saw looming in the future, upon Job's being the most estimable character in the world. Ladies had listened to Spooney when he spoke of his friend, the Mem-

ber for Blankborough, and the world would listen to him, as the world always will to a man of the Spooney type.

And so Job was safe from suspicion; it now only remained for him to rectify all the little "matters and things" which had occupied his late years, and continue that bold and glorious career, which was already irradiated with the transplendant beams of fame.

CHAPTER IX.

DAWNING OF FUTURE EVENTS.

Sir Robert Walters had already declared war against Hindly, by filing a bill to foreclose his equity of redemption. But Sir Robert was an unhappy man. In his mind, as age grew on him, there were floating the dark memories of other days; and, amid the circle of his family, he could not but recall the form of her whom he had long ago injured. But what had most disturbed his tranquillity of late was the scene in which, the

reader will remember, Lizzy had played so conspicuous a part. Why was it that her form, her manner, and voice struck him so forcibly? It was singular, indeed, that after she had left him, her tones seemed to linger on his ear like echoes from the past. But he persuaded himself that it was nothing but a freak of fancy; although her person bore a striking resemblance to what his former wife had been, it was nothing, after all, he thought; and if it hadn't been for the gout, to which he had lately become subject, he would not have recalled the unfortunate matter of his first love. But his animosity to Edgar increased every hour; and it was with a kind of fiendish triumph, such as only a nature like his could feel, that he read the account of the Heathmoor burglary, and heard of the suspicion which attached to the "unhappy youth," for whom he prophesied a miserable end. But with all his enmity towards Edgar, he little dreamed that his triumph would be so complete as to have him brought to his own justice room to receive his committal for trial

from himself. Nevertheless, such was to be his happy lot.

It was a few days after Edgar had left Heathmoor, that he was arrested at Raymonds, by the detective officers who were in possession of the documents which they had procured from Solomon. Thornbury had announced the circumstance to his master, and was waiting like a tiger in ambush, ready to spring upon his prey as soon as he should be brought within the magisterial presence; his evidence was, as he thought, cunningly prepared and digested, so that no amount of cross-examination would be able to shake the few damning points to which he was determined to depose.

Sir Robert had fortified himself for the occasion with half a bottle of port wine; and, according to custom, kept the prisoner waiting half-an-hour before he made his appearance. When he entered the room, he cast upon his enemy a look of stern and dignified contempt, which Edgar knew well enough how to return.

"Mr. Hindly—" said he, and paused.

Edgar waited the remainder of the sentence with calmness, but with a glance of defiance.

"I am sorry that—" he paused again.

"I am not entitled to commiseration," said Edgar. "I deem it singularly fortunate that this little ruse on the part of yourself and servant, should have succeeded so much to your wishes."

"What do you mean, sir?" asked Sir Robert.

"I will tell you hereafter," replied Edgar.

Thornbury was sworn, and stated to the circumstance of his having seen Edgar in conference with a gang of gipsies on the night before the robbery; that he overheard him planning with them the mode of carrying out his project; that he had expressed his hatred of himself (witness) to his colleagues; that he had afterwards heard him swear, in the presence of Parchment, that he would have the papers; that, to the best of his belief, it was the prisoner who inflicted upon him the battery in his bedroom; that he heard him say he had the key of the cabinet; that the key

was afterwards found in the cabinet on the common close by the spot where he had heard him plan the robbery; that he had afterwards attempted his life upon the common between the "Talbot" and Heathmoor.

Such was his villainous, but ill-conceived evidence.

"Have you anything to ask the witness?" said Sir Robert.

"It depends," answered Edgar, "upon your own feelings towards me. If you have made up your mind to comit me for trial, I shall ask nothing. If you believe the story of this instrument of yours, commit me, in heaven's name; but if you are resolved to be impartial, I will make my defence. You may rely on it that here, or elsewhere, I shall convict this villain of perjury, of attempted murder, for the bribe of a sum of money which was offered him at the instigation of someone; I say not by whom, Sir Robert."

The magistrate's face coloured with a crimson hue, while Thornbury's agitation scarcely per-

mitted him to stand without supporting himself by the table.

"I cannot understand you," said Walters; "you are brought before me on a charge of burglary. I must take the evidence as it is given. If it is insufficient to substantiate the charge, heaven knows I shall be but too happy to dismiss the case. I must do my duty, sir, without fear or affection."

"I know you must, Sir Robert," replied Edgar, sarcastically. "It is unfortunate that I should be brought before you, especially as there is every reason to suppose that there is by no means too much affection between us."

"Family matters are nothing now," said Sir Robert. "I am sitting here as a stranger to you, and will do justice so far as my judgment will permit."

"Officers," said Edgar, "you must secure this fellow (pointing to Thornbury), I shall substantiate my charge against him."

"This is trifling with justice," said Walters;

"once more, Mr. Hindly, have you anything to ask this witness?"

"Yes," said Edgar, sternly.

And turning towards his enemy, he looked into his face for a few minutes without speaking. The effect was instantaneous; the cowardly ruffian flinched under the eye of his victim, and manifested at once his malignity and his cowardice.

"You have deposed to my having attempted your life?"

Thornbury nodded.

"I will have answers," said Edgar, and repeated the question.

"Yes," said Thornbury.

"Were you with any person at the time?"

"Yes."

"With whom?"

"The girl Wilmington."

"Look this way," said Edgar; "why do you turn your head? Listen."

Thornbury looked towards him, and seemed to make a great effort at swallowing.

"Had you not thrown her upon the ground?"

"No," said Thornbury.

"Did she not scream for mercy?"

"No."

"That is enough for the present," said Edgar. "After you have sent my case for trial, Sir Robert—"

"But you are anticipating the whole thing," said Walters. "I am not so sure, Mr. Hindly, that there is any case against you. If you, but—"

"But there is," said Edgar; "he has already sworn enough! Who is the next witness?"

"I will ask you a question," said Walters to Thornbury, as anxious now to avoid further proceedings as he had been to forward them. "Are you sure," said he, "that this gentleman was in the room at the time of the robbery? Now, mind, Thornbury, if he should prove he was elsewhere, you may subject yourself to an indictment for perjury."

This was sufficient for Walters' purpose.

Thornbury now, as well as his master, wanted the case to go no further, as it seemed likely it would involve him in difficulties.

"I ain't sure," said he, "I thought so at the time."

"Were you capable of thinking at the time?" asked Walters.

"It mightn't 'ave bin' 'im," said Thornbury; "it wor about his size."

"That is nothing," answered Walters, "fifty men might be of his size. Did you hear him say that he would commit a burglary to get the papers?"

"He said as how he'd 'ave 'em."

"So he might," answered Sir Robert; "but it does not follow that he would break into the house to get them. Ridiculous! And the key! Where is the key?"

"It is here," said Robins, producing it from his pocket.

"You must be sworn," said Walters. And he administered the oath accordingly.

The evidence of Robins respecting the key was merely to connect it with the circumstances narrated. But the constable who took it from the cabinet was not there to swear to the fact.

"Where did you get this key?" asked Walters.

"From the constable."

"Is he here?"

"No, sir."

Walters seemed relieved.

"Do you know this key?" he asked Edgar.

"Do you know your duty, Sir Robert?" rejoined the prisoner.

"Mr. Hindly," said Walters, feeling abashed at the retort, "I have known your family a long while, and am sorry—"

"Pray, sir," said Edgar, "let me beg you to desist from any expressions of sympathy. I tell you honestly, Sir Robert, I am not afraid of justice if you are not. I sincerely trust that you will send this matter to a higher tribunal, where no such impertinent and irrelevant question will be

put to me as the one you just asked. I believe I am an Englishman, and therefore amenable to English law. If you adopt the French mode of examination I shall protest against it."

"You must be more reverent to his worship," said Robins.

"More what?" said Edgar.

"More respectful, please, sir."

"How dare you dictate to me!" said Edgar. "Sir Robert, what do you mean by putting to me the question you have?"

"This is insolent of you," said Walters. "I would save you from ruin if it were in my power; but if you—"

"You dare not save me, if you are an honest man," replied Edgar.

"I shall commit you for contempt, at all events," said Walters, "if you insult me in the execution of my duties."

"You have asked me if I know that key," said Edgar, smiling; "what is the meaning of the

question? It is for you to prove that that key was in my possession, and that I do know it. Proceed with your proof."

"What is this key?" demanded Walters of the witness.

"The key of the cab'net that was stole, sir."

"And where was it?"

"In the cab'net."

"And what in the name of heaven has it to do with the pr— with Mr. Hindly?"

Robins was confused. He had been hurried off by the communication of Thornbury, on the belief that almost any evidence would be sufficient to procure a committal; and, moreover, Thornbury had told him that he had seen the key in Edgar's possession. This, indeed, he had come prepared to swear. But now, even Thornbury was doubtful as to the course he should pursue. His low cunning, however, once more got the better of his fears, and he deemed it better to make a felon of Edgar than to allow him to escape, especially as

there was the deed behind containing the handwriting of his enemy.

"Do you know anything of this key?" said Walters, to Thornbury.

The latter paused.

"Have you seen it in the possession of Mr. Hindly?"

"Yes," said the witness.

"Where?"

"At—" he paused again.

"Before you answer," said Edgar, "remember there were others at Heathmoor besides yourself. Go on, if your perjured tongue is not already struck dumb."

"I beant sure," said Thornbury. "Maybe I be mistaken, but I thought as he had it in his hand when he said as how he'd take the papers."

"I shall not question you," said Edgar.

"You said before Mr. Parchment as how you had the key."

"That he had this key," said Walters; "this particular key?"

"This here key," said Thornbury; "howsomever, I believe it's the one."

"You see," said the magistrate, "there is scarcely evidence sufficient to commit Mr. Hindly on so serious a charge. This is a key, it is true, and you say it fits the lock of the cabinet; but you have no proof of its identity; and Mr. Hindly may have the original key in his pocket at the present time for aught we know. I cannot receive this as evidence. What is the next?"

"This here deed," said Robins, "signed by the prisoner."

And as he spoke he laid the document upon the table.

Walters read it carefully, and was about to ask Edgar if it was his signature, but his better sense for once checked him.

"I see," he observed, "this purports to be a deed of deposit of certain papers and documents relating to the Heathmoor estate."

"It do, sir," said Robins.

"This is very strong evidence," said Walters. "What have you to say, Mr. Hindly."

"I should wish you to ask the witness, if you please, where he got this strong evidence, and also the packet of papers; for I suppose that is material."

Walters was so confused that he scarcely knew how to proceed with the matter at all. And even Robins was as careless about obtaining a committal as he had been anxious for it. He perceived the villainous plot that had been concocted, and felt very much more inclined to take Thornbury into custody than to prosecute a charge which every circumstance seemed to show was unfounded. He related the manner of his obtaining the papers; and it certainly seemed very strong evidence in the eyes of Walters. He took down the depositions, and Edgar was asked the usual question.

"You obtained these papers from one Solomon?" said he.

"I did, sir."

"Did he say that was my handwriting?"

"He did not," replied Robins.

"Can you swear that it is?"

"No, sir."

"Can you swear that that is even my name?"

"Certainly not, sir."

"But I know that it is," said Walters.

"Do you know that it is my writing, Sir Robert?"

"I am not a witness," said Walters.

"I thought perhaps you were by your last remark, Sir Robert."

"Perhaps this fellow," he continued, turning towards Thornbury, "can swear it is my writing. He appears to have come prepared to swear almost everything. Look at it—is it my writing?"

"I dunnow," said he, "I beant much of a scollard."

"But, Sir Robert," continued Edgar, "for th e sake of giving you all the help which you seem to be in so much need of, I will ask you for a

moment to take for granted that it is my writing."

"Be cautious," said Robins.

"Cautious!" exclaimed Edgar. "It is for my accusers to be cautious; for this is a matter that shall go, whether you will or not, to another tribunal, however our relative positions may be changed. But I say, Sir Robert, admit for a moment that that is my handwriting."

"If it is I must commit you for trial," said Walters.

"Upon what grounds? The deed, I see, purports to deposit certain papers and parchments with one Solomon, relating to the estate and title of Heathmoor. Where are those papers?"

"Here," said Walters, "here they are."

"Let me ask you, Robins," continued Edgar, "are these the papers and parchments to which this particular deed refers?"

"I suppose they are."

"Suppose! You must either say they are or they are not, or that you know nothing at all

about them. Now I ask you to tell me if there is anything in that deed which recognizes, by date or reference, a single paper which you have produced?"

Walters examined the deed more narrowly.

"I cannot see that it does," said he; "it seems vaguely worded; but it was doubtless left with them at the same time."

"Can you swear that, Robins?"

"No, sir; but the man I had them from told me—"

"Told you!" said Edgar, contemptuously, "told you! Will 'told you' do for a court of justice? But I will go one step further yet, Sir Robert, and will place another weapon in your hand. Nay, sir, hear me, for I stand before you on my defence in an accusation which involves my future destiny. Suppose these documents are the identical instruments to which this deed refers." Sir Robert nodded. "I ask you, then, all of you, whether you can trace those papers to that cabinet?"

There was a pause which manifested the confusion of his accusers.

"Which of you can swear that those papers were ever in that cabinet, or the house of Heathmoor?"

No answer.

"Which of you can say those papers were a part of the spoil of the burglary?"

Robins had no evidence to offer, for what he had gathered from Solomon was not sufficient to connect the matter with Edgar; and the very deed itself went to contradict the fact of the papers having been left with the Jew in the clandestine manner he had first imagined.

"Does either of you know," asked Edgar, "what were the contents of the cabinet at the time of the robbery? Thornbury, you can swear to them, surely."

"I knowed nothing about 'em," said the keeper. "I never opened the box."

"You are villain enough for anything," replied Edgar.

"I have nothing more to say," he continued. "Sir Robert, do as you will. You have before you a rusty key, a packet of documents, and a witness who has five times foresworn himself in his evidence. I shall not humble myself to plead before you; but here is the key, which no one seems to know anything about; nobody, it appears, ever saw it before it was found in the cabinet, and this is brought forward as a proof that I was implicated in a certain burglary. There are sundry papers, found at a Jew's, one bearing my name, the others relating to the Heathmoor Estate. No one ever saw them before; no one can say they were ever in the house at all, and yet these are brought forward as conclusive evidence that I stole them from Heathmoor; but I shall not detain you, sir, with any further remarks except this, that if anyone can testify to the fact or the contents of that cabinet, he must have possessed the means of access to it."

Walters gave back the papers and the key to Robins, and turning to Edgar, was about to take

his hand, but Edgar drew back, and looked him in the face steadily and firmly. An angry pride flashed from his eye, and his countenance beamed with the spirit which animated him.

"I am happy," said Walters, endeavouring to conceal his embarrassment, "that this unfortunate affair has terminated, so far as I am concerned, without involving me in the painful duty of a committal. Mr. Hindly, I dismiss the charge."

"Robins," said Edgar, "I give this man Thornbury into custody for attempting to murder Elizabeth Wilmington. You will convey him to Heathmoor, where I shall be prepared with sufficient evidence to procure his committal."

Thornbury trembled; his master was confused and abashed. He begged Edgar to disbelieve the idle tale concerning his servant, and hoped that he would not endanger his character by a proceeding which must turn out to be ill founded.

"You know your duty," said Edgar to the officer, disregarding the remarks of Walters.

"Let me beg of you, Mr. Hindly," said Walters, "this really is a base return for the lenity—"

"Lenity!" exclaimed Edgar, "how dare you insult me with that word? I scorn it, and confess that I would not accept life itself at your hands. Officer, take him."

Thornbury was taken into custody, but not without an attempt at resistance. Robins, however, drew from his pocket a pair of handcuffs, the sight of which calmed the desperation of the cowardly ruffian; and he was led away, looking a vastly different being from what he was when he entered the justice room.

Edgar gave a formal bow to the magistrate, and left the room.

CHAPTER X.

MR. RAFFLES' COURTSHIP.

"Ha! ha!—ha! ha! ha! As the late Mrs. Raffles used to say, I ought'nt to laugh so. 'Oh, dear!' she used to say; 'you've quite an apoplectic laugh, Raffles'—poor thing!"

But it is necessary to inform the reader as to where we are.

The Misses Grundy were holding a tea party, to which, according to their usual custom, they had invited "the members of the platform," as they proudly designated the leading speakers at

meetings, among whom were the Editor of "The Pilgrimage," the Revd. Silver Spooney, the Revd. Joseph Drawler, and several others of "distinction." The illustrious persons mentioned were at the party discussing the muffins and small topics with relish, especially the Revd. Silver Spooney. His "dear face" was as genial and almost as long as a pumpkin; and to look at him, you could scarcely think he belonged to so wicked a world; indeed, as the Revd. Silver Spooney ignored all that part of the world that never asked him to dinner or tea, it may readily be imagined that he was by no means a worldly-minded man. But to observe the dignified manner in which he "assisted" himself to Martha's good things, and the persevering manner with which he renewed his attacks, would have considerably altered one's opinion if it had been supposed that the reverend gentleman utterly ignored the flesh, however little respect he had for the world and the devil. But he was a man of enlarged views withal; he preached

contentment to the poor and charity to the rich—he would tell the latter it was more blessed to give than to receive, but his practice had never been on any possible occasion in accordance with that text—he preferred the least of the two blessings, and prided himself upon his liberal principles. Martha and Mary liked him as ladies always like gentlemen who wear surplices, and have "dear, thoughtful faces." The consequence was, Silver Spooney was a frequent guest of the Grundys; he was their spiritual adviser, suggested to them objects of charity, and "directed their efforts" in their favourite task of reforming the poor of their locality; and often while Spooney was diverting himself in dissecting a cold fowl (having accidentally "dropped in"), he would divert the ladies' attention by mentioning hard cases that he had met with, or expatiating upon some new movement for the benefit of his and their fellow-creatures.

Mr. Raffles, on the other hand, was a man of different mould; his principal fault, as the late

Mrs. Raffles used to say, was his extreme generosity; he would wear a shabby coat for the sake of relieving some family that was in want. But this sort of conduct had never suited the late Mrs. Raffles; for, however ill Mr. Raffles chose to dress, it had never been her intention to follow his example; she adhered to the good old maxim—"Charity begins at home," and was so constantly preaching this to the worthy editor, that it was scarcely to be wondered at, if, with natures so adverse and dispositions so much at variance, they should never agree; nevertheless, there were many estimable qualities in the late Mrs. Raffles which he could not remember but with emotion. But the good gentleman had pictured to himself the ideal of his future wife. It must be one that certainly did not delight in fine garments. In Martha he had observed a girl—for so he called her, although she was on the verge of sixty, that is, if spinsters are *ever* so old—he had observed a girl who had as little regard for the costume of this world as he himself had: and we shall not

err in saying that a meek and quiet mind was her *only* ornament. Therefore, Mr. Raffles felt almost at home whenever he took tea with her. He had often spoken to her of his late wife, by way of introducing the subject of matrimony; and once Martha had gone so far as to enquire if he had never had a son or daughter. That was a great opening, thought the admiring Raffles; but it was still greater when she paid him the compliment of wondering that he had never married again. Once he had touched her fingers in taking the cup and saucer from her hand, and he thought there was just a slight blush perceptible on her countenance, if there was not even that still more unmistakeable twinkle in her eyes. But Raffles was never certain: sometimes he thought Martha had a great predilection for the Revd. Silver Spooney, and as he never saw any disparity in ages, felt a little jealous of the reverend gentleman's company. But he had never had the opportunity of discoursing with Martha alone; somehow or other Mary was invariably there, and

constantly, it seemed, intervening between his desire to communicate his love and its fulfilment. He had heard, however, that Spooney had been there when Mary was absent; but then, Spooney was a clergyman, and that might account for it—perhaps, after all, Spooney had no partiality for Martha. And so Raffles consoled himself; hoping and hoping for that moment to come when he should be able to lay his hand upon his heart, and offer both to Martha.

But would that moment—so long looked for—ever come? It is said that persons of rosy faces are hopeful of everything; whether this was so or not Mr. Raffles still hoped for Martha. He flattered himself that he was old enough to know his own mind, and when the time came to declare it.

Such were the feelings of Mr. Raffles as he sat at the tea table by the side of the object of his affection: a little too attentive, perhaps, to her, but by no means so much so as to be disagreeable. The subject of conversation had just turned upon that most pleasing of all topics to single

people—matrimony; and it was a casual remark of the editor himself which drew forth the hearty laugh with which the present chapter opens.

"I think you are right, Mr. Raffles," said Mary; "there is no question, as you very justly observe, as to the propriety—I say the propriety of all gentlemen refraining from the too common indulgence of remaining at their clubs after nine, especially of married gentlemen, Mr. Raffles. What do you think, Mr. Spooney?"

Mr. Spooney slightly pricked up his head, somewhat after the manner of a shying horse. But Spooney was by no means shy.

"Well—a—you see," he drawled, "married gentlemen a—a—have a—really so much greater inducements—a—so much greater—a—inducements to refrain, as you say. But St. Paul—"

"Was a bachelor," said the editor, seeing that Spooney was not quite ready with the quotation he intended to make.

"It was a wonder he never married," remarked Mary.

"I don't hold with too early marriages," said Martha.

"Nor I," added Raffles; "it is one of the greatest mistakes, I think, of our legislature to permit young persons to marry before thirty."

"Or thirty-*five*," said Martha.

Spooney shook his head—he scarcely knew how to reply—his usual failing in conversation.

"Spooney," said Raffles, "you don't hold with our philosophy, I see."

"Well—a—" said Spooney, and again paused while he cut another slice of tongue, "I was discussing the a—subject—with our dear friend Hawkins—a—the other—day—and—a—"

"Oh, have you see him, Mr. Spooney?" said Martha; "dear, nice creature!"

"I dined with him last week."

"But you don't mean to say he is engaged?" asked Mary.

"Engaged," said Spooney; "well—a—no—"

"I thought he was a declared bachelor," remarked Martha.

"What a noble-hearted soul he is," said Mary.

"He is, indeed," replied Spooney; "a most Christian-minded man."

"I expected to see him at the meeting last evening," said Martha.

"Weren't you aware that he buried his father yesterday?"

"Indeed!" said the sisters; "the poor gentleman's gone, is he? Mr. Hawkins said he expected it—what a severe trial to him!"

"He bore it with Christian fortitude," replied Spooney.

"I am sure he would," said Mary.

"It's one of those events which *must* happen," remarked Raffles, "the common lot of all."

"Parliament will miss Mr. Hawkins," said Mary.

Raffles smiled.

"Did I tell you his friend Hindly called on me?"

"No, Mr. Raffles—when was that? We have

missed him so much since he went way—poor Mr. Hindly. I pity him so very much, I think he has been greatly ill-used; it's a pity but some one would interpose and settle matters for him.

"There you have it again," remarked Raffles; "the effect of too early falling in love. As the late Mrs. Raffles used to say, she thought it so exceedingly injudicious that she would never do it again. I used to laugh when she spoke of it—poor Mrs. Raffles, I shall never forget her."

The conversation drifted from topic to topic, veering like a vane from point to point, Spooney occasionally showing a desire to sprinkle it with scraps of scripture, although he seldom got beyond the name of the chapter he intended to quote.

It was nine o'clock before the party broke up, and gladly did Raffles see Spooney take his leave with the rest of the guests, determined by some excuse or other to remain till the very last moment, and, if possible, like a wise man, to make the opportunity which he saw was so reluctant

to offer itself. His heart leaped when he found himself alone with Martha; for a stranger having been announced, whose business was represented as extremely urgent, Mary had left the room to ascertain the cause of so untimely a visit.

Mr. Raffles looked at Martha, and, perhaps, never in his life felt at such a loss for language. Martha observed his discomposure, and asked him if he was unwell.

Raffles replied with another look that made Martha blush, and she stirred the fire. When she looked up again, Raffles said, in a half whisper—

"Martha!"

Martha drew back, and said—

"Mr. *Ra*ffles!"

But she didn't rush out of the room, nor look unkindly, but gave a little sidling glance, which seemed to say—

"How *dare* you, Mr. Raffles. Oh, you bold creature!"

"Martha!" he repeated, in a fainter whisper, as though he was getting worse.

"Your language is *very* bold, Mr. Raffles, ex*ceed*ingly bold."

"But not—not offensive, I hope," said Raffles, dropping on his knee and sighing.

"What *is* the meaning of this, Mr. Raffles?" demanded Martha, with much emphasis. "If Mary should come in—" (a sigh)—"what *ever* will she think? Oh, Mr. Raffles, please—please —don't."

"What *can* she think?" said Raffles. "Martha —I—I—" Here his voice dropped again into a whisper—"I—I—yes—I—it must come out— I—l—l—love you."

"Oh, how shocking! you *dreadful* man!" exclaimed Martha, burying her face in her handkerchief. Then partly withdrawing it, she added —"Mr. Raffles, how *can* you—"

"I *do*," said Raffles, trying to take her hand, which she drew back a little, just a very little, in order to make Mr. Raffles come a little further.

"You quite bewilder me," said the spinster; "you do, in*deed*, Mr. Raffles. How can you?"

"Do I? No, don't say that. Yes, say it again, Martha." Another sigh, and he held her hand in his; then drew it gently to his lips, and as gently impressed it with as ardent a kiss as, perhaps, ever lover bestowed. Then he looked up again into Martha's eyes; his own seemed to swim, Martha's seemed to swim too, and Raffles' head seemed to swim, and it seemed swimming towards that of Martha, and perhaps would have reached it, if Martha hadn't gently boxed his ears and smiled, and said—

"Oh, you naughty, *bold* boy."

"Do you know, Martha—" he paused—"do you know, since I first saw you—"

"Now, Mr. Raffles!'

"Yes, it's a fact; indeed it is."

"What's a fact, Mr. Raffles?"

Raffles whispered—

"Call me *Septimus*."

"Really, Mr. Raffles, you are very—*very*—"

But Martha couldn't say it, in spite of her strong emphasis.

"Do you recollect my looking at you in church?" enquired the enamoured Raffles.

"No, indeed," said Martha; "I never have my eyes on the congregation."

"But don't you recollect when I was speaking at Exeter Hall, how I looked at you?"

"When, Mr. Raffles?"

"When I sent you the catalogue. Bless me, I mean the—the—what do you call it?—the hymn."

"Oh, Mr. Raffles, how *can* you go on in this manner?"

It was another kiss on Martha's fingers that drew forth the last remark.

"I love you," again whispered the gallant Septimus.

"For shame of you, Mr. Raffles!"

"No, don't say that, Martha."

"Will you take a glass of wine, Mr. Raffles?"

"No, thank you, Martha." And Mr. Raffles

was still drawing closer, his face burning with emotion, and his heart beating with all the excitement of forty years ago. "May I hope?" he whispered.

"*Hope*, Mr. Raffles? Hope *what?*"

"*You* know, Martha."

Martha blushed very deeply, and was so agitated, that Raffles was obliged to lead her to the sofa, where he sat beside her, still retaining her hand in his.

"If Mary should come in, Mr. Raffles—"

"Say Septimus, Martha," whispered Raffles; "say it once."

"I can't."

"Oh, yes you can, Martha. Try, *do* say Septimus."

"What magic is there in *Septimus*, do you think; it's not a scripture name, Mr. Raffles?"

"Oh, Martha!"

And again, and more deeply than before, Raffles sighed. It was evident that he was very far gone. He seemed to swallow something.

"What *do* you mean, Mr. Raffles?"

"You will, won't you, Martha?"

"I cannot divine your meaning, Mr. Raffles; really I never knew you so enigmatical before—you that I always esteemed for such wonderful—"

"Oh, *did* you, Martha," interrupted Raffles. "Oh, how glad I am to hear you say that. You must have seen that—that—that I always admired you, Martha—always loved you. Do you recollect when I touched your hand when I took the tea from you?"

"Mr. *Ra*ffles!"

"Such a thrill ran through me; you have no idea what I felt."

"How ri*di*culous you are, Mr. Raffles."

But, ridiculous as Martha deemed her lover, she allowed him to draw his face nearer and nearer, till Mr. Raffles's stiff grey whiskers just touched her face. Then they brushed her cheek a little more perceptibly, and yet Martha didn't seem to feel them at all. But Mr. Raffles felt it.

"Naughty, Mr. Raffles," said Martha; "how can you be so unkind? Oh, you naughty boy!"

"Unkind Martha?" answered Mr. Raffles, languidly; and this time his very cheek itself touched Martha's.

Both sighed, but for a moment neither durst look in each others face.

Raffles got bold first, and looked up and smiled. Then Martha looked up and smiled too, and it seemed to be a mutually understood thing to look up and smile.

"You *knew* I loved you, didn't you Martha?"

"Oh, Mr. Raffles, how *can* you?"

"There's a dear," said Septimus; and he almost kissed her lips.

Martha tried to pout a little, and then Raffles touched her chin. Then he squeezed her hand, and again whispered—

"Will you, Martha?"

"Will I *what*, Mr. Raffles?"

"Oh, you know, Martha, you know—no, you don't know how much I love—I *adore* you. The

very earth, Martha, without you, would be a—a —a—oh, Martha—"

"Really, Mr. Raffles, I never *knew* you so stupid."

"No, don't say it, my love; you know my loneliness—my—my—that is that I have no comfort, no companionship—and—as the late Mrs. Raffles used to say, I was made for society—that is, Martha, for the companionship of a loving wife. Oh, Martha!"

"*Seriously*, Mr. Raffles?"

"Oh, Martha, I am not a boy."

"Why, no, Mr. Raffles, not by *ever* so many years."

"How old should you think I am, dear?"

"How old?" repeated Martha, "seventy!"

"Now, Martha!" said Raffles, "how can you?"

"Well, *how* old, Mr. Raffles, forty?"

"Between the two," said Raffles.

"Fifty-five?" said Martha.

"Sixty-five," said Raffles, pressing more closely to the object of his adoration.

Martha laughed, but as she did so she unconsciously bent forward, and at the same time just a little sideways towards Mr. Raffles; and her face rested upon the burning cheeks of the amorous man.

But, at this happy moment, unluckily for the enthusiastic lover, the door opened, and Mary entered, accompanied by Mrs. Wilmington. She did not see the confusion of the lovers, who jumped up from the couch, and turned in opposite directions, Mr. Raffles' cough suddenly becoming very bad, and Martha's nose requiring a deal of blowing at the same time.

"Look! look! look! Martha," exclaimed her sister; "see if you know this lady."

Martha instantly recovered her composure, and looking steadfastly at the visitor for a moment, exclaimed—

"Oh, yes, my dear Ellen," and embraced her affectionately.

The tale was soon told. The events, already in the knowledge of the reader, were narrated,

and before Mr. Raffles took his leave, it was arranged that the ladies should repair, without delay, to Burwell, under the escort of that gentleman. Nothing could be so agreeable, and at the same time so romantic.

It need hardly be said that Martha accompanied the happy Raffles to the door, advised him to be careful of the night air, and to wrap up his throat with his large comforter, which Martha twisted several times round, until the good man's head was scarcely visible. Above all, he was to be *sure* and not breathe through his mouth on his way home, and was to take a good dose of Godfrey's cordial the last thing.

But, in spite of Martha's care, Mr. Raffles *did* pop his lips above the enclosure, and stole a parting kiss as he left.

CHAPTER XI.

BEFORE THE "JUSTICES."

It happened that the justices were sitting, or rather about to sit, in the large room of the "Talbot," when the officers arrived at Heathmoor with the prisoner.

But before proceeding with this part of the narrative, it may be as well to remark that on Mrs. Wilmington reaching the inn, on the evening of the same day that Edgar had set out on his homeward journey, she learnt the circumstance of his departure, and it was at once arranged

that Lizzy should remain with the Hopkinses, while her mother was to proceed to the sisters.

It need scarcely be said, that in spite of Lizzy's disappointment at being just too late to meet her long lost lover, she could not but partake in some measure of the hearty joy which Hopkins and his wife manifested at her arrival. It seemed as if Hopkins would never let go her hand as he stood talking to her about the recent events. He called her his child, his baby, and his dear, prophecied her future happiness, and foretold the circumstances which must happen; Thornbury was to be hanged, and Edgar was to triumph over all his misfortunes, and become just such another as his old master away down in ——shire.

It was decidedly his opinion that they were on the eve of great events. But when he saw the party arrive, with Thornbury in custody, his joy became outrageous. And as they entered the commercial room, the jolly landlord followed them, exclaiming all the way he went—

"Why what be this then? What be this? Master Thornbury, I be glad thee beest in honest company for once. Where be thic Master Hindly? for we be anxious for he. Where be he, genlemen; and what will'ee please to take?"

"Mr. Hindly will be here presently," said Robins; "and now, Mr. Hopkins, we want your boy."

"What, Bobbie! yes be sure ur do. I know'd thic; he'll be here, I warrant thee, and somebody else too—I'll tell'ee that. Bobbie! Bobbie! Lor how hoarse I be; but how com'ee to catch thic feller? I thought he wur going to put a better man in prison. Pish! a purty feller!"

At this moment Bobbie entered, hanging down his head as though he had stolen a sheep, and was going to explain how it came to pass.

"Here ur be," said Hopkins; "and now, Bobbie, mind thee spake the truth, and spake't right out straight, 'shamed o' no man. Hearken now I tell'ee; d'ye hear thic?"

"Ees, sir," said Bobbie."

Thornbury looked with a malignant and fiendish eye at Hopkins as well as the boy; conscious of guilt, he had yet indulged the hope that evidence would fail; he seemed to be certain that Lizzy would never return to Heathmoor, for he had watched her to the remote and obscure village, and had followed her thither to wreak his vengeance upon her if opportunity should offer; but when he caught sight of the gipsy his heart failed, and he knew by the pedlar's earnest glance that he had seen and recognised him. This was the reason of his sudden return to Heathmoor, where, as we have seen, he found his enemy, and endeavoured to rid himself of him by the means described.

"What 'ave you to say agin me, boy?" he asked, as Bob looked at him, and gave a kind of one-sided grin.

"Dunno?" said Bob.

"Let be," interposed Hopkins; "mind thee'll spake't right out in justice room. Hallo! there be Squire Thornby and Sir George Waltham; go

and take their horses, Bobbie, and be back to these genlemen in no time. Lor, lor, sirs, this be a purty business ; the village be all in uproar. I be glad, there I be fit to cry, —— if I beant."

Mrs. Hopkins brought in some refreshments, and hurried from the room, anxious to be with Lizzy when Edgar arrived, partly from a motive of curiosity and partly with the desire of introducing him to her presence. She had hardly quitted the room, when Hopkins, who had been looking out of the window, exclaimed—

"Here be Squire Hindly and Mr. Edgar. Lor, lor, how glad I be o' this. They be friends then, and father and son agin."

Thus saying he hurried from the room, and lifting his hat greeted them with that frank and honest face which always expressed more than his words. The Squire took his hand and shook it warmly, while a tear struggled to escape.

Hopkins' eyes glistened as he seized Edgar's hand and clasped it between his own, whispering into his ear—

"She be here."

Edgar's eyes brightened, his heart leaped, and his pulse beat quickly; in an instant his glance was turned towards the window, and he seemed to feel already in her presence. The momentous object of his visit was almost forgotten, and he hurried into the house, panting with the emotion which stirred the very depth of his soul. Hopkins detained the Squire with his quaint language, detailing all he knew, breathing his anathemas on Thornbury, and at the same time congratulating the Squire, in his own way, upon the reconciliation he had himself helped to effect. But Hopkins was also anxious to hear as well as to impart information. His questions, therefore, concerning the extraordinary business of the deed were numerous; but even Mr. Hindly was glad to communicate to one so sincerely attached to his cause all that he knew, including that which had taken place since Edgar had set out for Raymonds. As Hopkins listened he could scarcely restrain the rage he felt towards the ruthless villain who had sought Edgar's ruin.

"And it's my bleef," he exclaimed, "that thic burglry be all a job, sir—all a plot; but lor, that defence were clever, Squire, however did ur think of it? he were like a counsel. But lor, lor, Squire, it be the family; old Sir George wur the werry same, and it seem as if I live over the old time agin, when I see thic purty youth's face. Now, sir, I hope thee be most forgot all about what's gorne, and won't object to the young genleman's marriage. There, I told un I'd ax thee, and I 'ave. Lor, lor, she be like a angel, Squire, thee never seed a finer young ooman in all England."

Hindly's brow somewhat lowered as he heard this reference to the girl who had been the occasion of that long family feud, which had accelerated Mrs. Hindly's death. A slight shadow was just visible on the old man's face; but it was momentary. A sigh escaped his lips, and he said—

"Hopkins, I suppose it must be; it is a hapless, an ill-fated match; but I have consented."

"I be glad," said the landlord; "but why d'ye

call un ill-fated, Squire? She'll be a good wife, I'll warrant thee, and what can a man want more'n thic. There, I'll say't, she'll be a good wife."

"Do you know where she is?" asked Hindly.

Hopkins smiled.

"Ay, she be in here, sir."

"Here!" said the Squire.

"Yes, and if 'eell please to walk in, thee'll see her, and I'll warrant thee she'll bear looking at."

While this conversation was taking place Edgar had entered the snug little parlour of the "Talbot." Lizzy was not there, having gone, at Mrs. Hopkins' suggestion, to prepare herself for the interview, for the joy of seeing her beloved after so long a separation had so overcome her that the good landlady persuaded her to retire for a few minutes in order to recover her composure; nor was it altogether unnecessary, for Lizzy had scarcely reached her chamber, when a dizziness overcame her, and she would have fallen but for

the support of her friend, who administered a restorative.

As she entered the parlour Edgar rose, his heart seemed to leap from his bosom and he clasped her hand with the vehemence of one who was clinging for life.

"Lizzy!" he exclaimed, "my Lizzy, why do you cry? Are you not glad to see me?"

"Oh! yes—yes, Edgar," said the girl. "Thank God you are safe."

She was scarcely seated when Mr. Hindly entered.

"There she be," said Hopkins.

Mr. Hindly advanced and Lizzy rose, looking at him with some degree of suspicion, but more of diffidence. The old man took her hand and pressed it heartily. This was to Lizzy more than words could have expressed, for she felt that the old man's anger was passed, and the tears filled her eyes.

As the Squire looked upon her sweet, gentle face, she was indeed a picture of beauty; her fair

hair hung in wavy tresses upon her shoulders, and her pale broad forehead contrasted exquisitely with that carnation hue which tinged her smooth cheeks; her eyes, somewhat lowered after her first glance, were yet beaming with that indescribable emotion which animated her whole frame.

"Be seated my dear," said the Squire, "and let us forget all the past."

And as he spoke he led her to a chair.

"Lor, lor," said Hopkins, "how glad I be."

"Ay, Charles, and so be I too," said Nancy. "I be fit to cry, I be."

At this moment the policeman tapped at the door, and pushing it gently open, informed Edgar that Thornbury's case was called on.

"You must attend to give evidence, Lizzy," said he.

"I cannot, Edgar," replied the agitated girl; "I cannot go into the presence of—"

"You need not fear," said the Squire, "I shall accompany you."

"Ay, and thee must go too, Nancy."

"You must go with us, Edgar," said Lizzy; "but you must allow me a few moments."

Lizzy rose, and leaning upon the arm of the old Squire, seemed somewhat to recover her self-possession by the kindness which the old man was so eager to show her; and it need scarcely be said that he felt towards her all that he displayed; for her appearance, so gentle, so amiable, and her beauty so exquisite, had won his affection at the first glance.

When they entered the justice room Thornbury, who was standing between two policemen, partly turned his villainous countenance towards her, and, as he did so, a pale hue overspread it, and one might have seen condemnation in every lineament.

But it is unnecessary to detail the circumstances of the case, which was clearly established against him. Bobbie deposed to the facts already related, and it was sufficiently clear that Thornbury had been guilty of the most outrageous conduct towards Lizzy.

"What have you to say?" asked the chairman.

Thornbury denied, of course, every statement, and declared that it was Edgar, and not the gipsy, who had attacked him.

But at this moment the gipsy himself entered the room, causing an immense sensation. The constables looked at him with astonishment; but the gipsy's bold manner and unimpeachable testimony seemed to shake the suspicion which had been entertained against him, and he told his tale with a frankness and circumstantiality which no one could discredit.

"I know," said he, "that I've bin speckted o' this 'ere robbery, but I shouldn't ha' bin 'ere if I was guilty, an' I ain't afeard to be tried upon it; but I know this, that if it 'adn't a bin for me this 'ere lady would ha' been in heaven afore now."

Thornbury was committed for trial, and the usual formalities were then gone through, after which Edgar addressed the bench.

"Gentlemen," said he, "there is one matter

which I cannot leave the court without bringing before your notice; my character has been maligned and my reputation injured, by the suspicion which my enemies have circulated respecting the burglary. A key has been brought forward, and some parchments, one of them bearing my name—most certainly a forgery—in order to connect me with it. I have been already before a magistrate, one that I am assured was no friend to me. These men will lay before you the deeds, and I must beg of you, for the sake of my honour and reputation, to enable me to unravel the matter. That there has been forgery I am certain; but by whom I cannot conceive. These men will tell you that they obtained the deeds from a man with whom I have had pecuniary transactions, and I think you will agree with me, that it is only just that that man should be examined on the subject. He must know from whom he obtained them, and who forged my name to the instrument. I shall, therefore, ask for a summons against him."

The application was not unexpected, for the

magistrates were fully acquainted with the circumstances of the deeds by report, and one of them, by having already had them before him. The officer produced the documents, and after some questions had been put to Edgar respecting his transactions with the money lender, they acceded to his request, and granted the summons.

It is needless to attempt to describe the joyous evening that was spent at the "Talbot." Hopkins was incessant in his congratulations, and could scarcely restrain himself from repeating for the hundreth time the many excellent qualities of "the old family."

Mrs. Hopkins was attired in her very best gown and her whitest cap, decorated with blue ribbons. Her shoulders were ornamented with bows of the same colour, and her rosy-faced spouse frequently declared that she was the plumpest woman in the county, although "she were but a poor skinny thing when he married her."

CHAPTER XII.

MR. RAFFLES VISITS SIR ROBERT ON "BUSINESS."

It was a few days after these events that Sir Robert Walters was sitting in his study, meditating on the serious turn which matters had taken. The assizes, at which Thornbury was to be tried, were close at hand, and he knew that the late gamekeeper was villain enough for anything. If, therefore, he should attempt to avert his punishment, or mitigate it by confession, his (Sir Robert's) position would be exceedingly dangerous.

It was in vain that Lady Walters endeavoured to soothe him; that his daughter asked him the reason of his melancholy condition, and tried to console him with those little exercises of filial fondness which she knew so well how to display. As he sat brooding over his unfortunate position, and cursing his fate, a servant handed in a card. The baronet adjusted his spectacles, knitted his brow, and then stammered—

"Mr. Septimus Raffles; and who the devil's Mr. Septimus Raffles. Show him in."

In a few moments the talented editor entered, bowing profoundly, and smiling as generously as if his business were of the most pleasing character. Indeed, had he been the family lawyer, just on the point of communicating the successful termination of some long-winded law suit, which was to bring untold wealth into the possession of his client, he could not have manifested a more exultant air.

"Sir Robert Walters, I presume?"

Sir Robert bowed very stiffly, and had evi-

dently formed his estimation of Mr. Raffles; he had taken him for one of those social pests, the collector, or other officer of some benevolent fund; and, irritated as he was, declared that he was tired of such repeated calls upon his benevolence.

"I beg your pardon, Sir Robert," said Mr. Septimus Raffles; "but you as entirely mistake my character as you do the nature of my visit. I am come, sir, on very important business—*very* important business, I assure you. Hem!"

"Perhaps you will be good enough to state it," said Sir Robert; "my time is rather precious, and it's bench day."

So saying he pulled out his watch.

"I believe," said Mr. Raffles; but he paused, for the business he felt to be of a very delicate and awkward nature; and Sir Robert appeared to be in a very awkward humour just then; and Raffles felt that a deal of tact was necessary; for Sir Robert was also of a very awkward size, compared with his own somewhat chubby figure and

short stature; but tact had been a great subject with Septimus, who had always argued that it was far more useful than talent. "I believe," he repeated, and again hesitated.

"Do you want the prayer book?" demanded Sir Robert; "you appear to know very little of your creed."

This remark was a great relief to Septimus, and gave him an opportunity of taking up another position.

"No, sir," said he, "I have not forgotten the Apostle's creed, nor—"

"That will do," said Sir Robert; "perhaps you will be kind enough to state your business."

"My business, sir, is of a somewhat unpleasant nature."

"I knew that," said Sir Robert, "and your manner is quite in keeping with your business."

"I believe, sir, you were in India during—"

"What the devil's that to you?" exclaimed Sir Robert. "How dare you question me on

private matters? State your business, if you have any worth troubling me with."

"In due time, if you please, Sir Robert; but I believe your name was at that time—"

"Perhaps you will be kind enough to leave my house," said Sir Robert.

And thus saying, he rang the bell so violently, that not only the servant, but Lady Walters and Miss Walters rushed to the chamber.

Septimus Raffles felt that his position was growing more and more perilous; and as he turned his eyes towards the group of persons who confronted him, it appeared that he was very likely to undergo an action of violent ejectment.

Lady Walters, who had a great deal of the vixen in her, and only wanted a change of sex to be a villain, looked upon Septimus as though he had been guilty of some act of great brutality towards her husband.

"Pardon me," said Raffles, "but what I have to communicate were better told in private. Lady Walters will not be pleased to hear—"

"I shall be *dis*pleased to hear it then," said the lady. "Sir Robert's business is *my* business, sir; mind *that* now."

"Now, my dear," said Sir Robert, "perhaps it were better."

"My dear," said Lady Walters, "I *insist* upon waiting here till that brute is gone."

Septimus drew a long face, and turned up his eyes; it was scarcely credible that a lady should utter such a dreadful expression. Lady Walters had sent away the servant and her daughter, and, with woman's curiosity, not to say obstinacy, persisted in remaining. Having posted herself at the door, she looked at the "brute" with as much suspicion as if he had just broken loose from a menagerie.

"Really," said Raffles, "I would rather—"

"Permit me to say," replied Lady Walters, "that I shall remain here till you have settled this important business with my husband. It must be a pretty business, indeed, that is not fitting for his wife's ears as well as his own; things

have come to a pretty pass. What next? I should like to know. Sir Robert, you will understand, is an invalid, and at present suffering from extreme nervous debility, and is under medical treatment; therefore, sir, you will excuse me, perhaps, if I stay. I *shall* stay, you may depend upon it. I could have wished you had delayed your business to some other occasion; but you don't get over *me*, Mr. *Raffles*."

"Perhaps it would be as well," said Sir Robert.

"No," replied Raffles, "I am bound to communicate it, and to demand from your hands justice, if that be possible; if not, some reparation."

"Good Heaven! what do you mean?" demanded Sir Robert.

"Fine language in our own house," said Lady Walters; "perhaps you will explain yourself, sir."

"Excuse me, madam, but as I told you before, my business is with Sir Robert, and as—"

"And as I please to *know* it, I shall remain for that purpose," replied the lady.

Septimus was confused; he scarcely liked to make the disclosure, and he certainly began to repent of not bringing a proper escort of constables to protect him in case of violence; he felt, too, that in spite of all his theories about tact, it had failed him when most needed, a trick which courage is apt to play off upon the braggart, and morality upon its loudest professor.

Raffles also perceived that he had committed the mistake of beginning at the wrong end of his tale; a by no means pleasant feeling, even when one's personal safety is not jeopardised, as Septimus evidently felt his was on the present occasion.

After pausing for some moments, in order to recover that presence of mind which we might almost say was absent, he commenced again.

"You must not take it ill on my part, Sir Robert, if what I have to communicate is of a disagreeable nature; I am merely the attorney."

"Attorney are you?" said Sir Robert.

"Attorney, *indeed*," exclaimed the lady.

"I don't use the term in its professional sense," said Raffles, "but I believe you once knew a lady by the name of Ellen Grantley?"

Sir Robert turned pale; his head drooped; his lips quivered.

"What is that to you?" he shouted.

"Oh! the impertinent wretch!" said Lady Walters. "Did ever anyone hear such consummate impudence?"

"To me it is nothing," said Raffles; "to you it may be a great deal. That lady," he continued, "I believe was married to you in India, and—"

Sir Robert broke out into a fit of swearing. Lady Walters turned deadly pale, and stood erect; her eyes fairly glared at Septimus Raffles, but the latter, nothing daunted, proceeded.

"That lady, whom you deserted, is still alive, and—and—her daughter—"

Lady Walters gave one tremendous shriek, and then swooned, while Sir Robert jumped from his seat in order to kick Septimus.

"Pray—sir—pray—pray," exclaimed Raffles, as he shifted his position, and was pursued by the angry Sir Robert. But he was not allowed to proceed further; for the servants, hearing the scuffle, and the shriek of their mistress, rushed into the room, and the butler, who was a powerful fellow, seized Septimus by the collar and tail of his dress coat, and dragged him from the room.

"I say—I say—I say," exclaimed Septimus, "how dare—how—how—how da—"

But he was out of the house before he could finish the word, and a horribly dilapidated person he looked; the coat which he had worn for so many years was torn and disfigured, one tail was completely gone, his hat was crumpled in, and the large frill of his clean white shirt, which he so much prided himself upon, was dangling down over his long waistcoat; and in this plight, panting and coughing, he wandered across the park, in the direction of Raymonds.

An immense excitement prevailed as he pre-

sented himself before the company, who were waiting his arrival.

"My dear darling Septimus," exclaimed Martha; "don't cry—never mind—*there's* a dear."

And she wiped his face like an affectionate nurse.

"I'll have a constable," said Raffles; "this is a defeat, but—but I'll renew the attack."

A long discussion followed, which ended in the constable being sent for, a proceeding which Mrs. Wilmington by no means approved of, but which, under the circumstances, was the best to adopt.

Meanwhile, be it remarked, Edgar and Lizzy had returned with the old Squire to Raymonds; and at this moment the young couple entered from their morning's ramble. The appearance of Septimus was truly grotesque, standing as he was in an attitude of patient resignation, while Martha stitched up his frill, and his plump cheeks distending themselves by frequent puffs.

"We must remember," said Lizzy, "he is my father."

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Wilmington, "and I would not injure him for all that he has done to us; but I will, nevertheless, assert my right, and demand reparation for your sake, Lizzy, not for mine."

"Nay," said Lizzy, "I can be content to be disowned by him, and would rather be disowned than acknowledged."

"But he shall acknowledge you," said Edgar. "We must leave him no breathing time—he may escape us. The carriage is ready."

"When did you order it, darling?" asked Lizzy.

"When we returned from our walk, for I saw that Mr. Raffles had met with rough handling—here, too, is the constable."

The party, including Martha and Mary, drove off to Burwell, and Septimus looked as triumphant in the large body of the carriage as if he had been a victorious general in his chariot, and

as happy as though they were driving off on a pic-nic excursion. The constable was on the box, although Septimus had suggested the propriety of concealing him in the boot.

There was great excitement at Burwell as the carriage drew up—the extraordinary news had run through the house that "a former wife of master had turned up." Some were very glad, for it would be a change, and the dull monotony of a park required something of the kind to keep the soul from stagnating; some were asking how it would be with Lucy; and some how it would be with Sir Robert; others wondered whether both wives would take the title, and which would be mistress—and a thousand other speculations were afloat, which it would be idle to enumerate. Lady Walters had been carried to her chamber, where Sir Robert was endeavouring to soothe her by assuring her it was the most infamous scandal that had ever been concocted. But Lady Walters was not of a disposition to be soothed; she had always hated Sir Robert as much as a fine and

fastidious lady could, consistently with her dignity, and in fact had never loved any one in the world except her own precious and important self. To gain a title had been the reason of her sacrificing that haughty and arrogant self on the matrimonial altar; Sir Robert was her senior by some years, but that was no matter when the object was position and family connection. Before her marriage she had flirted in almost every grade of life, from the nobleman in the Guards to her father's valet; but when she attached herself as a sort of aide-de-camp to Sir Robert, she did so with the full intention of merging past delinquencies in a title. It was unfortunate that what she bargained for was another's, and still more unfortunate that the other had now come to strip her of her borrowed dignity, and expose her in the eyes of the servants over whom she had tyrannised, and the neighbourhood over which she had so long domineered. In that neighbourhood, indeed, she had been a bitter weed of Satan's planting; for her very acts of charity, if it is not

profanation to use the word in connection with such a woman, had been but instruments to work out her oppression, and purchase for her that submission which she could never have obtained by other means. But the surest proof of her harsh and haughty demeanour, blended as it was with the most wretched meanness, might be found in the circumstance that the oldest of her numerous domestics had not been six months in her service. The harmony that should subsist between employers and employed was unknown in the household of Lady Walters: her proud notion was that society consisted of only one class—the upper ranks; the other portion of the human family was but the instrument which Providence had invented to supply them with all they required. To suppose that they were fellow-creatures, moved by like passions and capable of the same aspirations, was a theory which her ladyship could never understand; and woe to the unhappy maid who did not on every occasion prefix "my lady" to her answers. Indeed, with

Lady Walters, dogs and horses were creatures of a much higher order than the "people;" the latter, to use her own phraseology, being the most despicable, discontented beings in the universe. One circumstance I will mention to complete the picture of this estimable lady, and give the reader a better idea of what her popularity in the neighbourhood was: on one occasion she met a rustic, who passed her without pulling his forelock. Her ladyship turned sharply upon him, and demanded peremptorily if he knew who she was.

"Do ur? should say so," said the man, "and what yer be too; and when I takes off my cap to 'ee, it 'll be for love o' thee."

But we are keeping Mr. Septimus Raffles in the hall.

When Sir Robert found that it was absolutely necessary to confront his enemy the second time, he bade his disconsolate lady compose herself, while he went down and explained the mistake.

"Compose myself, indeed!" said Lady Wal-

ters; "how shall I compose myself under such circumstances? No, Sir Robert, I will see to the matter myself—but it cannot, it cannot be true. Oh! I shall go mad! mad, Robert."

"Lucy!" said Sir Robert, "how can you doubt me?"

But Lady Walters jumped from her bed: she looked like an Amazon, her dishevelled hair flying wildly about her neck, and her eyes flaming with rage. She accompanied Sir Robert from the room, and, as she encountered the group in the hall, she exclaimed—

"What is this, Sir Robert—are we to be invaded, or beseiged, or—and you, Mr. Hindly, what do *you* want here? I command you to leave this house, remain at your peril, sir—how dare you to set foot in my—"

"Pray, madam," said Edgar, "let us first ascertain your right, and we will then listen to your commands, and consider if they are to be obeyed. Our business is with the master."

Lady Walters looked what she would have ex-

pressed, but what her rage prevented her from saying—her lips quivered, but at length she spoke in a voice of almost desperation—

"What wretched creatures have you here?"

"There!" said Martha; "did you ever, Mr. Raffles?"

"One of the wretched creatures," answered Edgar, "is Lady Walters herself, whom, I presume, we shall presently compel Sir Robert to acknowledge as his lawful wife."

Her ladyship was dumb with rage; but she covered her face with her handkerchief, and screamed.

"I can't—I—I—can't understand all this," said Sir Robert, very much in the tone of understanding more than he liked to confess.

"Then permit me," said Edgar, "to explain: this is your wife, whom you abandoned in India."

"It—it—it is Wilmington!" exclaimed Walters.

"It is as I say," replied Edgar, "and this

young lady I will introduce to you as your own daughter—nay, don't start, Sir Robert—you ought not to shrink from your own child."

Walters trembled, staggered, and would have fallen, but one of the servants ran to his assistance.

"And who is this fat fellow here?" demanded the second wife; "is he not some remarkable person, too? I shouldn't wonder but what you will swear presently that he's my husband."

Her ladyship was evidently beginning to have some idea that the matter was a joke: the whole thing seemed so truly prepostrous.

"Heaven forbid!" said Raffles.

"Why it's only a joke, Sir Robert," said Lady Walters.

"Robert," said Mrs. Wilmington, to whom a little longer that name must belong.

Her husband looked at her with a vacant gaze.

"Do you not recognise in me the girl whom you lured from her home; if not, you may read

here the evidence of our marriage: here is the certificate which you supposed was destroyed—here, too, are my bridesmaids, Martha and Mary Grundy."

"My God!" exclaimed Sir Robert; "but you lie—you lie—it is not so."

"Look upon your daughter," said Mrs. Wilmington; "your own flesh and blood will contradict you, see! Is she not what I was in those happy days—but I don't come to punish or harm you, Robert; I am here to demand reparation for the injury you have inflicted, so far as it may be in your power to repair. Here, here" (pointing to her daughter) "is the claim upon you—do justice to her, and I shall trouble you no more."

"Base creature!" exclaimed Lady Walters.

"I command you," said Mrs. Wilmington, "to refrain from such language; remember *I* am Lady Walters, *you* his mistress."

Lady Walters was almost mad, and the probability was that she would have murdered Mrs. Wilmington if she could have done so.

"Did I not tell you," continued the latter, "that you would be husbandless before Sir Robert's death? and *you are;* but keep the empty honour of an ill-gotten title—I am willing you should still be called what you are not, but justice to my child I will have."

"It is all a lie," said Sir Robert.

"Constable," said Edgar, "do your duty. I give this man in charge for bigamy."

"No, no, no—not my father!" exclaimed Lizzy; "spare me that, Edgar—we can settle it without that."

"It might not have been bigamy," said Raffles; "seven years you know—"

"It wasn't *one*," said Mrs. Wilmington; "yes, yes, it is bigamy. Robert, hear me—will you do justice to your daughter?"

But none of those standing round perceived that Sir Robert was unconscious of the proceedings: his mind had yielded to the shock, and in another instant he was struck with apoplexy, and fell prostrate amid the assembly. The consterna-

tion of the whole party cannot be described; every effort was made to restore the unhappy man, and after a few moments, he recovered from the first fit sufficiently to recognise Lizzy, whom he at once acknowledged as his daughter, and then threw up his hands as if in prayer for mercy, and died. Lucy meanwhile had come to him, but her grief cannot be told; she clung to her father's neck, and could not for several minutes be taken from him. Lady Walters, on the other hand, was frantic with rage, and cursed in the bitterness of her heart, the soul that had just gone to render its account at the tribunal of the Judge of all. It seemed as if every feeling of pity or sorrow had fled from her; she turned frantically upon Mrs. Wilmington, and told her peremptorily to depart.

"No," said Edgar, "not now, Lady Walters" (addressing Mrs. Wilmington); "you will remain here until we ascertain whether Sir Robert left a will. Madam," he continued, turning to her late ladyship, "has Sir Robert—"

"What is that to you?"

"Simply this," said Edgar, "that if he has not you are entitled to nothing of his property or effects, and have no further right to remain in this house. But I will ask the butler; it is possible he may know."

The servants who had been most intimate with Sir Robert's business believed that he had died intestate—but the point was tolerably well settled when Radley, the valet, said that Sir Robert had told him only the day before that he intended to make one; that his affairs were confused; and, indeed, had written a letter to the solicitor, which Radley had himself posted to "Messrs. Winkins and Co., of Lincoln's Inn."

"In that case," said Edgar, "you are entitled, Lizzy, and—"

"You dare to touch anything here," said the late Lady Walters.

"I shall dare do a great deal now," said Edgar, "I assure you. What things belong to you, madam, you are at liberty to retain, of course;

but of the rest I shall take possession on behalf of Miss Walters."

"There is Lucy," said Lizzy.

"This woman," whispered Edgar, "must be kept at arm's length—it is necessary to be prompt and decisive."

"Quite right, quite right," said Raffles, "prompt and decisive."

"Madam," said Edgar, "we shall do justice to yourself and Lucy, you need not fear; but remember the right of Lady Walters and her daughter must not be interfered with. They will not injure you in the least."

"Heaven forbid!" said Lizzy.

The late lady sneered.

"You have not proved the marriage of Sir Robert," she exclaimed.

"It is sufficient that we have proof, that is if the witnesses of the marriage and the certificate will satisfy you; if not, you may see the register. I will tell you the church—I believe it was ac-

cording to the rites of the Church of England, Miss Grundy?"

That lady replied in the affirmative, her face shining through her tears as she leaned on the arm of Septimus for support.

I need not linger over the unhappy scene. Her late ladyship having spent a considerable time in useless rage, and a great many words of malediction and reproach against Sir Robert, sent for her solicitor. Edgar, however, on behalf of Lizzy, remained in possession until their legal representatives arrived, and matters were then left in their hands.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

ANOTHER chapter will bring this history to a close. Job, having arranged everything to his satisfaction, pursued even more recklessly the career of extravagance which was so surely undermining his prospects and working out his ruin. In his bosom rankled the curse (as he called it) of illegitimacy, and from the moment of perjuring himself in order to "prove" the fictitious will, despair seemed to have taken possession of him. His unbounded influence over his unhappy

mother was exerted to complete the dissipation of that splendid property to which she and his brothers were entitled. Estate after estate was sold, and the funded property squandered, as though Job had nothing else to do in the world but work out the ruin of his family. But the end of all came at last. His seat in the Commons knew him no more, the platform lost its champion, and before Martha and Mary had ended their protracted visit at Raymonds, Job had discharged his secretary, and retired to the continent. There was little chance of his villainy being discovered, for all his misdeeds had been planned and executed with a skill and aptitude that, exercised in an honourable pursuit of fame, would have ensured him that success which, as a youth, he had so ardently coveted. His ambition had been noble, but his means of achieving it had plunged him into the vortex of infamy; his courage was indomitable, its exercise had been ignominious; his talents were considerable, but they had been misdirected; his whole nature, in

short, which, under careful tuition and training might have been termed noble, had been warped by early associations and evil intercourse. No one may sympathise with him in his fate, but all who read his history, must regret that a mind so capacious should have been subjected to such evil influences, and that a disposition really generous should have been wrought upon by circumstances which a kinder parent might have meliorated, so that honour instead of infamy would have been his reward. But when away from the scenes of his dissipation, the follies and the crimes of his career passed like a horrid panorama before his view. His life now was objectless, without an aim or a hope, without a single solace, or even the soothing influence of repentance. Remorse was gnawing at his heart, the fair visions which his young imagination had pictured, were transformed into clouds of eternal blackness, laden with the vengeance of heaven. If security from detection or punishnment could have given him ease he possessed it to its fullest extent; but what

could secure him against the bitter reflection that he had brought his mother's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave; that she had been reduced to destitution; that his brother was penniless; that Martha and Mary, who had entrusted him with their money, had been deprived of their subsistence?

Nothing could alleviate his misery, and he determined to give himself up to justice; whether any tincture of his life-long fraud was in his last scheme was a question between himself and the Searcher of hearts; whether to regain the property he had fraudulently sold, for those whom he had injured, was his motive, or whether to discharge his bosom of its enormous load, by confession, can never be known; but that he returned to England and confessed his crime, is certain. And then took place one of the most extraordinary trials that was ever witnessed in a court of justice. He had destroyed the valid will, and no proof could be adduced of his many forgeries but what his own lips declared. An action of

ejectment had been brought by his brother against the possessors of an estate that Job had sold. Job's confession had produced a compromise; but many of the estates depended upon his guilt or innocence when he placed himself on trial for forgery.

He pleaded guilty.

In subsequent trials he was brought up from his prison, but the singular feature of them was that the learned advocates of the defendant struggled to prove that the convict was an innocent man in spite of himself; their cross-examinations were directed to the purpose of shaking his own testimony with regard to himself, and never were efforts put forth with more tact and less success; the prisoner's evidence, or rather his confession, remained unshaken, and with unblushing front he deposed to his own perjury and forgery. On the other hand his brother's counsel struggled to prove his guilt by extraneous evidence, all of which failed, and they were left to support their case by the prisoner's

confession. His sentence was penal servitude for life; and here let us take our leave of the ambitious youth, the applauded champion of universal right, the advocate of popular liberty, the pet of society, the fop of the House of Commons, and the self-convicted felon!

Before Martha heard of the misfortune that awaited her and her sister, she had made arrangements in conjunction with Mr. Septimus Raffles for her marriage; Edgar's was to be celebrated at the same time and place. I have heard it said that when we are approaching that all important epoch in our life, the world seems a very little thing indeed, excepting only that portion of it which we are about to enfold to our bosom. The events of life pass by unheeded, matters which would have absorbed our thought, called forth our energy, changed our pursuits, or distracted our minds, are as trifling and inconsiderable as the knats which flit by on a summer's day. The scholar abandons his books, the soldier forgets his study of fortifications, the doctor cares little

for physic, and, I had almost said, the parson forgets his prayers, but having an awful reverence for him, I forbear. It is hardly to be wondered at then, if, at Raymonds, the newspaper was neglected; even the mighty organ of Septimus Raffles, for Septimus had left the business to his "sub," merely writing the important political article, which he well knew no other man in the world was capable of writing.

But it was before the trial of Job that the day for the weddings was appointed, and I should ill discharge my duty if I allowed the marriage joys to be interfered with by any knowledge of what was going on in the outer world. So let Septimus lead his blushing bride to the altar in blissful ignorance that her fortune was gone, and that for the future both Martha and Mary must trust to him for subsistence. The reader, too, might fancy that the marriage of Miss Grundy was almost too soon got up, upon which subject, therefore, I will offer a few observations. It generally happens that when business is post-

poned it is at last done in a hurry, and no one will deny that marriage is one of the great businesses of life. Martha, too, belonged to a class which conceals itself in so much reserve that frequently its most favourable opportunities pass by unimproved. Martha and her sister were always extremely reserved. If a gentleman before the most formal introduction had ever dared to look upon her, he was considered a barefaced brute, a heathen, a savage; the consequence was that, not flitting about in society very much, their chances of introduction had been few, and a ripe age had been attained before the proposal came. Moreover, Martha had always reckoned herself a beauty who needed only to be seen to be loved; an artist, however, might have pronounced her nose a little too long and somewhat too sharp, and her eyebrows too much after the shape of the curving portions of the letter B, with the same propensity to meet in the middle. But however this might have been, Martha had discovered that she was not a bargain for anybody, and that

delay in marriage is a mistake. Her turn had come at last, and after duly arraying herself in her delicate bridal costume and taking care to see Septimus' throat well wrapped up to avoid the possibility of bronchitis, she entered the drawing room of Raymonds, where Lizzy, neatly attired, was already awaiting in trembling hope and joy the arrival of her beloved Edgar. Mr. Septimus Raffles was very, very smart; nothing could excel in whiteness his blooming frill, and nothing exceed the stiffness of his shirt collar, over which his plump rosy cheeks fairly hung. His coat fitted to perfection, a really new article, the first of seven years; and he looked, as he pulled and pulled at the fingers of his gloves, a very miracle of tailorism and laundry-maidism. He was slightly agitated it is true, but his eyes beamed with the radiance of love, as he gazed on the muslin immersed figure of his bride. Then came the rushing, sweeping noise of bridesmaids, the bustling activity, the titter of half hushed voices, and the musical laughs

of such an occasion. Eyes everywhere beamed with joy, and the whole retinue of the domestics of Raymond crowded to the chamber to get a glimpse of the girl they had all known long enough to love; they pressed forward with faces that told the tale of happy hearts, and every countenance beamed the congratulations which words could not have uttered.

And there she stood, the sweet girl of so many vicissitudes, whose young years had been clouded with cares such as seldom fall upon one so lovely and pure; there she stood, the meekest, happiest, and fairest of them all, as glorious in beauty as she was angelic of soul. Her heart was full, too full for her to do more than return, with the sweetest of smiles, the many kind looks that greeted her from that group of happy faces, as leaning on the arm of the old squire she passed through the crowd toward the carriage. Many were the hands she pressed; the joy was too great for restraint, and the tears of all were blended with the happy smiles they gave her. When

Edgar passed along, a new thrill ran through the assembly, and the voices that had been hushed with emotion hitherto, broke out into a long, loud, and deafening hurrah, and the old hall rang as it had not resounded in the memory of man. The cheers were taken up by the assembled villagers, and the old park re-echoed with a hundred shouts. The horses pawed and tossed their heads as though conscious of the happiness, and with a merry rattling sound the procession moved away. But all along to the door of the village church the crowds were collected. Every one knew the tale, all loved the hero and heroine, but no one seemed to shout loud enough to express his admiration. It was the triumph of Love, and such a victory always pleases hearts that are neither frozen by prejudice, nor shrivelled by the parching conventionalities of excessive gentility.

With what eager expectation the village waited the return of the happy pair need not be told; but when the old steeple with its joyous peal sent the news that Edgar and his bride were one, that

the triumph was complete, when the old ivy-clad belfry seemed to shake again with the music of its iron tongues, and the summer breeze bore far away the happy sounds; then there was crowding to the church door, along the churchyard, to the old yew trees, to every available spot where a sight could be obtained of them as they once more passed to their carriages. Then again came shouts which drowned the clangour of the bells; and again, amid the wishes of a thousand hearts, the flying of a hundred caps, the waving of innumerable handkerchiefs, the bright beams of every face, they drove once more away to commence the festive banquet which had been prepared for all who would partake of it. Such a day had never been known at Raymonds, and never can be again, for such a conjunction of circumstances can happen only once; and it needs them all to produce those feelings of triumph which accompanied those of love on this occasion.

The packet which Edgar's mother had given him, obediently to her promise, was opened on

his wedding day. It contained an account of his pedigree, which had hitherto been concealed from him, for the reason that more exalted prospects might tend to lessen his admiration for one who was in every way worthy of him. Such Mrs. Hindly knew to be too frequently the weakness of human nature. Edgar had been heir presumptive, and was now heir apparent to an earldom which had descended through a remote branch of the maternal line.

I must not omit to mention that Hopkins and his wife were not forgotten during this happy time. And Charles it was who threw the slippers into the carriage as it rolled away on the wedding tour—for Charles had great faith in old customs, especially in old slippers, and said in his speech at the table, after his health had been drunk, "Edgar's kinsmen done the same for I when I were married." He assured them all that his marriage had been extremely happy and prosperous, if not prolific; and as Charles had helped to drink as many healths after those of the brides

and bridegrooms as he could consistently with any regard for his own, he concluded his display of bridal oratory by addressing his wife, and saying, "Thee were but a poor skinny thing when I married thee, and see now what thee beest!"

Lady Walters (the late Mrs. Wilmington) was an honoured guest, and not the least merry of all the merry souls of that party. She was cheered and blessed, and the children danced joyously with her. She was a true and kind-hearted woman.

The sun had set, and the moon risen upon the scene of hilarity, and yet the music played and the dancing continued. The large tent was illuminated with a hundred lamps, and decked with emblematic flowers of love and hope; and another day had dawned before that joyous wedding party had broken up.

Although the Reverend Silver Spooney's prospects were very much blighted by the fall of his illustrious patron; he, nevertheless, as the saying is "rubbed along;" he didn't often get a new

coat, or a dinner at the table of a Member of Parliament; but he continued to preach down "the root of all evil," although struggling and scheming very hard to pluck some of the fruit from its overhanging branches. He was as fond as ever of tea parties, and found on the whole that nothing paid very much better than a sombre face and the platform. But his mind at length entertained a new project; he knew well enough that there were plenty of the other sex to be caught by a surplice, and thought the best thing for him to do was to get married. He disdained commercial enterprise in general; but this species of traffic was not commerce; and even if he should succeed in marrying a citizen's daughter, why, the money that she would bring, would be at least one remove from its original source. So he made up his mind not to be over scrupulous in case a very pretty young lady, possessed of some score thousands, should fall in his way; he would rather that she should have been the daughter of a General, or someone of that sort, it was

true; but, money was money, after all; and if she was very amiable, and very pretty, why, he didn't know that he should not condescend to lift her to his own rank—hem! So Silver Spooney set himself to work, equipped himself in very dandified costume, which he didn't pay for, and looked very winningly at the fair sex. One or two soon passed under review; but the first disgusted him one morning as he accidentally dropped in at lunch time; for, instead of finding her at the piano, she was positively darning a stocking! This so shocked the revd. gentleman, that he just stayed long enough to partake of a hearty lunch, which served him for dinner, and then took his leave of a lady who was so prosaic and unsentimental as to employ her time in such plebeian occupations; it was exceedingly low and vulgar in the eyes of Silver Spooney, and there was an end of that courtship. After sundry other adventures of the kind, the young curate at length discovered "a positive angel" (positive angels are very rare); one that always played

when she was not too ill, and when she was, lay on the couch and cuddled her lap dog, or languidly perused the last novel. She was the dearest creature Silver Spooney had ever seen, in spite of her papa being a tea merchant. The idea of darning stockings would have made her shriek. She usually rose at eleven, breakfasted at twelve, and lounged till four. To this young lady Silver Spooney attached himself, and after a brief courtship, proposed, was accepted, and married. Of course he could not be so mercenary as to ask her papa for any fortune on his marriage, and it would not have been exactly the thing to take it from the hands of a commercial man. But unluckily for the revd. gentleman it never came at all, for the young lady's papa shortly after became a bankrupt, to which unenviable position the clergyman's lady had helped in a great measure, and to the best of her ability, to bring him. But papa's altered circumstances did not alter the nature of the lovely bride; she lounged as

much as ever, and was ill much more frequently; she didn't know exactly what bankruptcy meant, and didn't exactly care; but if she didn't bring the Revd. Silver Spooney a large fortune, she brought him a large family, and before he could better his position it grew considerably worse. Nine children were far from a light burden, although a great blessing. But Mrs. Spooney still played, and still lounged, although the piano had considerably lost its charms, and the lounging its sentiment. And here I take leave of the revd. gentleman, hoping he may mend his circumstances, and not have to mend his own stockings himself—a prospect which seems looming in the no very distant future for him.

The other reverend fellow took to billiards, and managed to eke out a tolerably respectable existence.

Solomon, when he heard of the distress of his client, raved very much about his monish; he fled from justice as far as he could, but was even-

tually taken; and, in hope of saving himself from the full penalty of the law, made a confession, (which tended to elucidate many cloudy points in the affairs of Edgar,) and was sentenced to transportation for fifteen years.

Thornbury was transported for ever—for he swallowed a very copious draught of prussic acid —enough, the doctors said, to kill fifty people, so that in two senses the devil had his due.

Friday, after his master's dilemma, obtained a situation as barman at "The Dragon," which suited him remarkably well; but in a short time (and this will prove how ineffectual it is to attempt to smother genius) his abilities, latent as they had been, manifested themselves in the wonderful aptitude which he displayed for knocking people down, especially those who were drunk and incapable. The consequence was that certain members of the P.R. took Friday in hand, put him through a severe course of training, and eventually engaged him for a pugilistic encounter

with the "Tipton Slasher," on Woking Common, where Friday distinguished himself by getting half-killed and wholly beaten, after which he retired from professional life, and opened a snug beershop in the neighbourhood of "Seven Dials."

Readers usually like to know what becomes of the various characters to whom they have been introduced; and therefore it is that I am endeavouring to fill up what would otherwise be a blank in this history. I briefly notice then the remaining characters.

On their return from the wedding tour, Edgar and his bride repaired for a short time to Raymonds till Heathmoor Abbey could be got in order. Lucy and her mother were kindly treated by Lady Walters, and permitted to remain in Burwell; and it is just to observe that Lucy and Lizzy became very affectionate sisters; the past was never mentioned, and no cloud seemed likely to return from that dark and boisterous region.

Bobbie was taken into Edgar's establishment, where he was settled at Heathmoor, and ultimately became under-butler.

It was many days and months after the events recorded, when the gipsy, wandering through the neighbourhood of Heathmoor, with a fine girl by his side, met Edgar and Lizzy in one of their rambles. It is needless to say how the past rushed back upon their minds, and how many thanks Lizzy tendered for the noble services which the gipsy had rendered her. Nor was Edgar less happy when his dark and stalwart friend told him that this was "the gal" whose life he had saved on that eventful night. Then came the explanation of the key, and with some feeling of regret the gipsy confessed that it was taken from the pocket of the great coat in which he had wrapped the child. "But not by her hands," he said; "it was the loon that he cuffed while the gentleman was there." Nor was the gipsy a partner in the burglary, which had been committed

by the men who had accompanied them on that night, although he declared that it was their intention to have the "caddy," as they termed the cabinet, after hearing (no one knew how), that it belonged to the gentleman. A quarrel had ensued among the thieves, and then it was that the papers got into the hands of Solomon, who was the most notorious receiver of stolen property in London.

THE END.

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